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WALL PAINTINGS OF THE WESTERN HIMĀLAYAS

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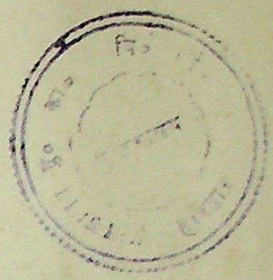

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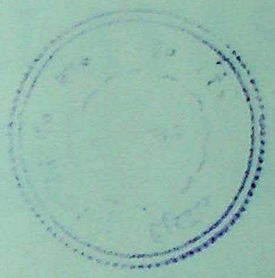

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PREFACE

The classical tradition of wall paintings epitomized in Ajantā, Ellorā and Bāgh did not die in the country but petered into obscurity. Literary tradition of the first one thousand years after Christ indicates that it was a living art. Even in early medieval times, there are instances of wall paintings in the buildings constructed by the Sultāns of Delhi. During the Mughal period again this art seems to have revived in the palaces and temples built by the Hindu rulers of the times, both in the Western Himālayas and in Rājasthān.

In this book an attempt has been made to put the art of wall painting in the Western Himālayas in its proper historical, geographical, socio-economic, political and religious context, but the main emphasis has been on a stylistic study of this art. The technique of the wall paintings in this region has been carefully analysed and compared with the classical and contemporary wall painting tradition as well as the art of miniatures.

Without entering into a speculation on the chronology of these paintings on the basis of tradition handed down through local legends, an effort has been made to form a general estimate of the approximate dates on available stylistic data.

The State of Jammū and Kāshmīr and the district of Lāhul and Spiti of Himāchal Pradesh, although falling in the Western Himālayas, have been left out from this study as it is hoped that they would be covered in a separate volume.

Dr. Niharranjan Ray, Professor Emeritus, University of Calcutta, has guided and advised me at every stage of this study. I owe a great debt of gratitude to him. Dr. M. S. Randhāwā, Dr. Mulk Rāj Ānand and Dr. B. N. Goswāmī gave me valuable help in the beginning of this study. Dr. C. Sivarāmamūrty, Dr. Gairolā and Sarvashri O. P. Sharmā and Khullar of the National Museum, New Delhi, have also helped me during the various stages of this book by making available to me, for analysis and study, the vast collection of Indian miniatures and a few wall paintings in the National Museum. Photographs of miniatures shown as Figures 74, 75, 77 and 86 have also been supplied by the National Museum. The Librarians of the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simlā, the Panjāb University, Chandigarh, and of the National Museum, have also unstintingly helped me with library facilities. I am grateful to the successive Directors of the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simlā, for giving me accommodation in the Institute where I could sit and write in peace. I am indebted to Miss Harriet Gilmour of the British Council for going over the manuscript and to Shri Harish Chander for typing and re-typing it painstakingly. Finally my thanks are also due to the staff of the Photo Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and to the Publications Division, for seeing the book through its various stages of publication.

MIRA SETH

Chandigarh
The 26th October 1975

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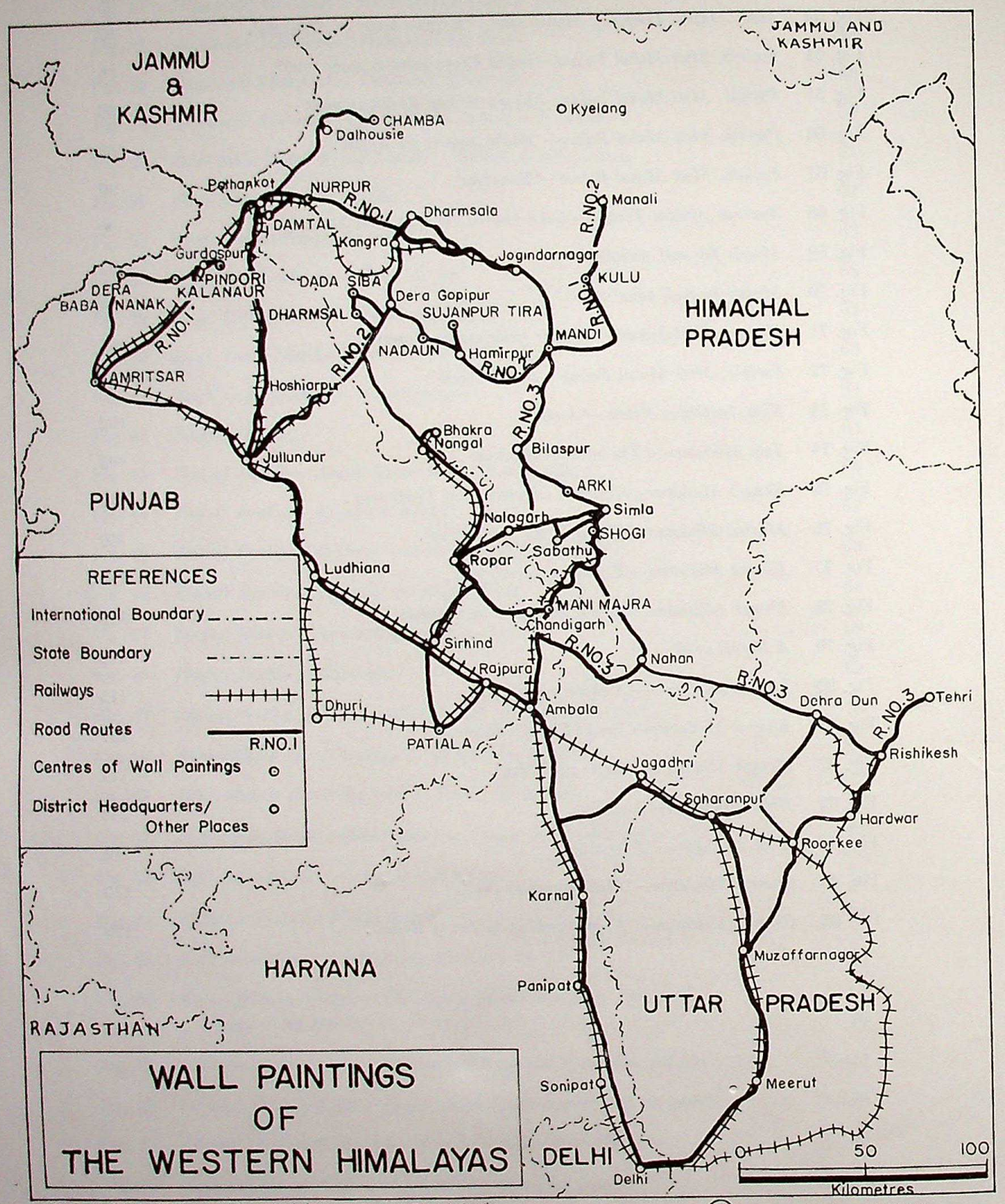

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1

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE WALL PAINTINGS found in the Western Himālayas are confined mostly to what is now the state of Himāchal Pradesh. They are found lying between latitudes 30° 45′ south and 33° 12′ north and longitudes 17° 5′ east and 78° 45′ west mainly in the districts of Kāngrā, Chambā, Kulū, Simlā and Mañḍī. A few districts of the present state of Punjāb—Gurdāspur, Hoshiārpur, Amritsar and Paṭiālā—and the Ambālā district of Haryānā have also been included in this study because they have wall paintings belonging to the Pahāḍī tradition.

The most magnificent feature of this area's topography lies in its mountains. The Himālayas in Himāchal Pradesh consist of three ranges, mountain peaks and a broad band of hills identified by Sir Alexander Cunningham[1], the Head of the Archaeological Department and an early surveyor of the ancient geography of India, as the first part of the chain which he designates as the 'Outer Himālayas'. The highest range in the Outer Himālayas are the Dhaolā Dhār mountains. To the south of the Outer Himālayas is a narrow fringing band of hills for which the name 'Sub-Himālayas' seems to be appropriate.

The main rivers of Himāchal Pradesh are the Beās, Rāvī and Sutlej. The smaller rivers include the Binnuan, the Pabbar, the Girī and the Sarsāh. Innumerable small streams and rivulets, which criss-cross the entire region can be crossed only in the summer. In autumn they flood the area and are unfordable; in winter they are converted into sheets of ice. Himāchal has beautiful valleys also. Mr. Barnes, a British civil servant appointed as Settlement Officer, Kāngrā, in the late nineteenth century to devise a revenue settlement for this district, writes in his report[2] that "between these dreary hills are romantic glades resonant with the busy hum of men and lowing of cattle. Cottages nestle under the hill-side and the corn waves luxuriantly protected

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from the winds that desolate the heights above." This description also applies to the other valleys of this region.

The Kāngrā valley, stretching for 42 kilometres amidst the mountains, is traceable from Dhatwal on the borders of Kahlur, to Shāhpur on the banks of the Rāvī and turns back towards the tehsils of Hamīrpur, Ḍehrā Gopīpur and Nūrpur. The Kulū valley, known as the 'valley of the gods' because of its loveliness and the worship by its inhabitants of innumerable gods, is a narrow strip along the banks of the river Beās. Mañḍī's location is similar to that of Kulū. In Chambā, the valley of Bhattiyat Wizārat is situated between the high Hāthī Dhār and the Dhaolā Dhār mountains. On lower heights are the valleys of Sadar Wizārat, the Chenāb Wizārat and the Brāhmin Wizārat.

The districts of Amritsar, Hoshiārpur, Gurdāspur and Paṭiālā are located on the broad plains of the Punjāb. From time immemorial, there have been a number of routes leading from the plains to the Western Himālayas. One of the most ancient routes went from north Punjāb to Amritsar and from there through the district of Gurdāspur *via* Paṭhānkoṭ to Nūrpur, Kāngrā, Mañḍī and Kulū. This was the route invariably followed by the Muslim invaders. A second route starting from the plains of Hoshiārpur went through the Ḍehrā Gopīpur tehsil of Kāngrā, to Nadaun, Hamīrpur, Sujānpur Tīrā, Kāngrā, Mañḍī, Kulū and Lāhul and Spitī. This route has been clearly described by Moorcroft, a British veterinary surgeon, who undertook a journey on this route after visiting Mahārājā Ranjīt Singh in Lāhore[3]. A third hill trail lay through Ṭehrī Garhwāl, Ḍehrā Dūn, Nāhan, Maṇī Mājrā, Sabāthū, Nālāgarh, Bilāspur and Mañḍī. This was followed by Moorcroft in his first journey into the Western Himālayas[4].

It is of significance to note that artistic activity was concentrated in the towns found in the valleys and on the main routes of entry into the hills. Most of the big palaces and temples, in which the wall paintings of the region are found, are located in these towns.

The topography of the Western Himālayan region with its snow-covered peaks, thick forests and turbulent rivers gives not only physical magnificence to this area but also contributes towards its comparative peace and isolation. Throughout the centuries this region, sheltered in the seclusion of hills and mountains, remained removed from the mainstream of Indian life and civilisation to carry on its own slow tempo of life almost without any appreciable change. The existence of the various routes in the hills, however, acted as an insurance against stagnation and saw to it that the reverberations of bigger events on the plains reached the hills. This had two important effects on the art history of this region. Its comparative inaccessibility made it a place of refuge for those people who wanted to escape the occasional turmoils of the plains, and secondly, it allowed art to develop by providing relative security as well as the stimulus of newer ideas brought by repeated waves of refugees.

From the earliest times, people of the plains who were dissatisfied with the existing political system or afraid of religious persecution, or unwilling to let themselves be swept by hordes of foreign invaders and were yet keen to preserve their cultural and religious integrity, seem to have been migrating to the hills. The first people to enter this area from the outside and spread from Peshāwar in the west to Central Himālayas in Garhwāl and Nepāl in the east, were perhaps the Khāsas, a tribe mentioned in the *Purāṇas* but about whom not much is known. There is

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also a persistent tradition that Gosāins, Gaddīs, Gūjars and a few sub-sects of Brāhmins came to the hills from the plains[5]. Among the people who came here as a result of religious persecution were some Jain pilgrims who reached Nagarkoṭ as late as A.D. 1027 believing that "when all other countries have been waylaid by the *mlechchas* (foreigners), this *tīrtha* (pilgrim centre) alone stands uninjured like a lake in *maru-bhūmi* (desert[6])". Even Muslim princes often resorted to the hills for refuge. When Mahmūd of Ghaznī invaded the Kāngrā fort it was reported to be serving as a place of refuge for the princes of the Shāhī kingdom[7]. Nāsir-ud-dīn, the son of Fīrūz Tughluq, fled to Sirmūr and Nagarkoṭ in A.D. 1388[8]. The *Akbarnāmāh* tells us that during the reign of Bakht Mal of Nūrpur (A.D. 1513-58) Mirzā Kāmrān, the younger brother of Humāyūn, on being driven out of Kābul, retired to India in A.D. 1558 and took refuge with Rājā Bakhu (Bakht Mal)[9]. Sikander Shāh Sūr also sought refuge at Nūrpur in A.D. 1555[10] and Shāh Shujā, was given temporary shelter in Kulū in the nineteenth century[11].

A number of archaeological finds testify to activities in the field of art in this region from very early times. Quite a few Audumbara coins with the characteristic symbol of the early Buddhist *stūpas* have been found here[12]. Remains of Kuṣāṇa architectural activities have been traced in the ruins of a *stūpa* near Kāngrā at Chetrī, and two rock inscriptions written in Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī scripts have been found at Kaniharā and Pathyār[13]. The wooden hill temple of Brahmor in Chambā district has an architectural plan which closely resembles the Gupta stone temples of Nachnā, Kuthāra and Aihole[14]. Remains of Gupta art can also be found in Thānā near Kulū where it appears that the plinths of two small Gupta shrines have been incorporated in the sub-structure of the Muralidhar temple[15].

It is quite probable that from the earliest times the entire Himālayan belt enjoyed a common polity consisting of small kingdoms. It is likely that the Western Himālayas formed part, nominally at least, of the great empire of the Mauryas[16], Kuṣāṇas[17] and the Guptas[18]. The Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang, who visited India in the first half of the seventh century A.D., mentions Jālandhara and Kiu-lu-to which Cunningham identifies respectively with the Trigarta kingdom of Kāngrā[19] and Kulū[20]. It is quite possible that the empire of Harṣavardhana may have extended its sway over the hills as it did over the Punjāb. From the seventh century onwards, it seems, according to Kalhana's *Rājataraṅginī*, that Kāshmīr played an important part in the affairs of Trigarta. Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa is mentioned as having given the kingdom of Trigarta to his attendant[21], and Śaṁkaravarman (A.D. 883-902) is stated to have defeated Pṛthvī Chandra of Trigarta[22].

The Gurjaras who seem to have entered India in about sixth century, spread themselves first over Gujarāt and Western Rājasthān. But by about the ninth and tenth centuries, they spread to the entire Svapadalaksha or the Śiwālik area which seems to have included the hill country from Chambā on the west and Western Nepāl on the east. Grierson, the father of modern Indian linguistics, has traced the influence of Rājasthānī on the Pāhāḍī languages[23]; it is not unlikely that the penetration of Rājasthānī culture dates from the palmy days of the Gurjara-Pratihāras. During the long medieval centuries many more Rājpūt princes and noblemen and private citizens seem to have migrated from the plains to the Western Himālayas where they intermixed with the Gurjaras and the Central Asian and other tribes who had already settled there.

Most of the kingdoms in the Western Himālayas during the medieval centuries seem to have been founded by immigrant families from the plains. The *rājās* of Nūrpur claim descent

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from the Tunwar or Tomar *rājās* of Delhi whose political suzerainty ended in the plains with the death of Pṛthvīrāja Chauhān in A.D. 1176[24]. The founder of Chambā is supposed, by one source, to have come from Mārwār in Rājasthān[25] and from the Kalpa valley, by another[26]. Yet a third source states that he came from Oudh in the sixth century A.D.[27] The royal families of Kulū and Jaswān are assumed to have come from Prayāga[28] and Ayodhyā[29] in Uttar Pradesh. The *rājās* of Bilāspur (Kahlur), Nālāgarh (Hindun) and Chanehni are generally presumed to have come from Chanderī in Bundelkhand[30]. The rulers of Keonthal are said to have come from Prayāga and those of Baghal or Arkī from Ujjain's Panwār or Parmār clan of Rājpūts[31]. The royal families of Sirmūr claim to have come from Jaisalmer[32], and the *rājās* of Darkotī and Banghal from Mārwār and Vārānasī respectively[33]. The rulers of Suket and Mañḍī are said to be Chandravaṁśī Rājpūts and to have come from Bengāl in the thirteenth century[34].

The following hill states are claimed, by Hutchinson and Vogel[35], who did pioneering work in the history of this region, to have come into existence by the twelfth century A.D.:

JĀLANDHARA OR TRIGARTA: EASTERN GROUP

Country	Clan
Kāngrā	Katoch
Guler	Guleriā
Holta	Guleriā
Jaswān	Jaswāl
Sibbā	Sibbiā
Dātārpur	Dhadwāl
Nūrpur	Pāthāniā
Chambā	Chambiāl
Suket	Suketiā
Maṇḍī	Maṇḍiāl
Kulū	Kaulvī
Kutlehr	Kutlehriā
Bhangal	Bhangaliā

Later on, these dynasties came to claim their descent from the Chandravaṁśa and the Sūryavaṁśa. This claim cannot be proved historically as these dynasties are not mentioned in ancient Indian genealogical tradition as recorded in the *Purāṇas*, nor in any other dependable source.

The advent of the Rājpūt princes into the Western Himālayas in medieval times had far-reaching effects, particularly in the field of art and culture. They brought with them a spirit of heroism, chivalry and a courtly way of life and certainly also their language and culture. What is more significant is the fact that their culture manifested itself in an efflorescence of artistic activity, especially in painting. It was predominantly the Rājpūt way of life of the court, hunting excursions, episodes from history, scenes of love and romance, and a courtly fondness for dance and music which are illustrated in the wall paintings of this region.

The advent of the Muslim Turks and later of the Mughals into India proved eventually to have very important historical and cultural consequences for the hill areas. For the first time,

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the Western Himālayas were exposed to a religious and cultural pattern totally alien to their own. Mahmūd of Ghaznī was the first Muslim to enter the hills in A.D. 1009[36]. The *rājās* of Kāngrā are said to have fought on the side of Pṛthvīrāja Chauhān in the battle of Tarāin. Muhammad Tughluq is stated to have reduced the Kāngrā fort in A.D. 1337[37] and Firūz Tughluq to have taken it over in A.D. 1361[38]. In A.D. 1399 Timur made numerous incursions into the valleys and ravines of the Outer Himālayas and captured much booty and killed a large number of people[39]. It is probable that Sansār Chand I (A.D. 1430) of Kāngrā was a tributary of Muhammad Shāh of the Sayyid dynasty[40].

The contact of the Western Himālayas with the Mughals began in Bābar's reign. The *rājā* of Kahlur owed allegiance to Bābar[41]. Akbar sent Mughal generals to subdue various hill states from A.D. 1572 onwards[42]. The policy of the Mughal empire as enunciated by Akbar and followed by his son and grandson was that all the hill *rājās* should recognise the paramount suzerainty of the Mughals, pay tribute to them in kind and do military service whenever called upon. Akbar sent Ṭodar Mal to create a royal demesne from some of the most fertile lands of Kāngrā[43]. He is reported to have told Akbar on his return that he had "cut off the meat and left the bones"[44]. Similarly, all the hill states paid *nazarānā* (tribute) to the Mughals which in Shāh Jahān's time amounted to four lakh rupees annually[45]. Many hill *rājās* became *mansabdārs* and undertook military duties on behalf of the Mughals. Rājā Jagat Singh of Nūrpur, for example, fought on behalf of the Mughals in the Deccan and against the Uzbeks of Balkh and Badakshān in A.D. 1645[46].

Mughal imperial authority appears to have sat very lightly on the hill states. Their prerogatives were seldom questioned and there was no interference in their internal affairs. They were freely allowed to build forts, wage wars against one another and even take part in the struggle among the Mughals themselves for imperial power.

In spite of this liberal and generous treatment under the Mughals, the brave Rājpūts of the hill states could not but feel restive under them. There are instances of repeated revolts against the Mughals. During Akbar's time, in A.D. 1588-89, the *rājās* of Kāngrā, Jesroṭa, Nūrpur and Lakhanpur revolted against the authority of Delhi[47]. According to local tradition Rājā Chandrabhān Chand of Kāngrā carried on unremitting guerilla warfare against the Mughals even after the secession to them of the Kāngrā fort. Sūrajmal of Nūrpur, known as the famous 'Jagatā' of folk-lore, revolted in A.D. 1623[48]. The fanatical policy of Aurangzeb appears to have alienated the Hindus of these regions. In A.D. 1678 he ordered Rājā Chattar Singh of Chambā (accession A.D. 1664) to demolish all Hindu temples in his state. In defiance of this *firmān* (order) the *rājā* commanded that a gilt pinnacle should be put on all the main temples[49].

The close political contact of the hill *rājās* with the Mughal empire was perhaps the immediate socio-political situation which helped the beginning of the art of painting on a large scale in the hill states. The hill *rājās* were expected to visit the Mughal *darbārs* at the coronation of every new emperor and on other important occasions and to pay *nazarānā*. The *Tārīkh-i-Punjāb*[50] mentions that Rājā Trilok Chand of Kāngrā went along with the other hill chiefs to pay homage to Jahāngīr on his accession in A.D. 1605. The hill *rājās* were also frequently summoned to the Mughal *darbār* to fulfil the military duties assigned to them or to be rewarded for the services rendered or to be punished for dereliction of duty. Akbar adopted the practice of retaining a prince or a close relative from all the ruling houses of these states as hostages for the good behaviour of the

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rājās[51]. Trilok Chand of Chambā was such a princely hostage in his court and was a great favourite of Akbar, which made even Jahāngīr[52] jealous of him. At the beginning of Jahāngīr's reign there were twenty-two princes from the Punjab hills as hostages in the Mughal court and it was then that Jahāngīr conferred on each one of them the title of *Miān*[53]. The hill *rājās* could not have failed to be impressed by the interest the Mughal court took in the art of painting and the active patronage they extended to the artists and their activities in the court. The Mughal emperors, princes and nobles were also in the habit of presenting miniatures, including their own portraits, to the various *rājās* as a mark of special favour[54]. The Mughal artists themselves painted portraits of some of the *rājās* of the hills. William Finch, an English traveller who visited Kulū in A.D. 1611, mentions that 'Rajow Bassow' (Rājā Basu of Nūrpur) was pictured among the nobles of Jahāngīr, standing on the king's left hand, in certain fresco paintings which Finch saw in the Lāhore fort[55]. Early eighteenth century paintings of two Jammū princes, Dhruva Dev and Ananta Dev, made by the Mughal artist, Ṭek Chand, are found in the Johnson collection of the India Office Library[56]. It is also likely that the hill *rājās* had the opportunity of seeing Mughal frescos at Fatehpur Sīkrī and the Lāhore fort. The hill *rājās* used to take Mughal miniatures presented to them to their courts and it is quite likely that the local artists were inspired and influenced by these paintings. With the decline of the Mughal empire and the disintegration of the royal studio, the artists, both Hindu and Muslim, were deprived of royal patronage on a large scale. It is quite likely that a few of them at least may have migrated to the Western Himālayas and were patronised by the contemporary hill *rājās*.

The political hegemony of the Mughals over the Punjāb hill states came to an end with the cession of the Punjāb to the Durrānīs. Among the three traditional groups of states in the North-west Himālayas Kāshmīr alone was directly under Durrānī rule. The central and the eastern groups of states were only nominally subject to the Durrānīs. The hill chiefs were encouraged by the anarchy which prevailed in the plains to regain their independence and recover the land of which they had been deprived by the Mughals[57].

During the period of instability in the Punjāb, following the fall of the Mughal empire, some of the hill states regained virtual independence and acquired considerable influence in their neighbouring areas. Among these were the kingdoms of Kāngrā, Nūrpur, Chambā and, to a lesser extent, Kulū and Mañḍī. With the emergence of virtually independent hill states, it was natural that activities in art would receive royal encouragement and patronage in this area. It is of interest to note that most of the wall paintings of this region were painted after the decline of the Mughal empire and the consequent emergence of comparatively stronger hill states.

The state of Kāngrā was the premier state of this area. Rājā Ghamanḍ Chand who came to power in A.D. 1751 took advantage of the prevalent anarchy and recovered the territory that had been wrested from his ancestors by the Mughals, with the exception of the Kāngrā fort. He was appointed *Nāzim* or Governor of Punjāb by Ahmed Shāh Durrānī in A.D. 1758[58]. His grandson, Sansār Chand, who succeeded to the throne in A.D. 1775 further extended the boundaries of the state of Kāngrā. He first recovered the fort of Kāngrā from the Mughals in A.D. 1786 and then pursued a policy of aggrandisement at the expense of the other hill states. He demanded recognition as paramount power in this area from the rest of the hill chiefs and they surrendered to him the most fertile areas which had formed part of the Mughal demesne[59]. In pursuance of this policy Chambā, Mañḍī and Kutlehr were attacked and subdued in quick succession[60]. For twenty years Sansār Chand was the unquestioned ruler of the hills. This

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unchallenged political supremacy enabled him to devote his time to cultural pursuits and pleasures of life. He was a great patron of music and dancing, but more perhaps of painting. He and one of his wives were responsible for the wall paintings of Gaurīśaṅkara and Narmadeśvara temples in Sujānpur Tīrā. Sansār Chand also built the *Śivālaya* in Nadaun and embellished it with wall paintings.

Nūrpur, the neighbouring state of Kāngrā, also played a crucial part in the history of this region. It assumed great importance during the time of the Mughals beginning with Bakht Mal who ruled between A.D. 1513-58. The *rājās* of Nūrpur were patrons of artistic activity. Rājā Māndhātā, the grandson of Jagat Singh, is supposed to have built the *Ṭhakurdvārā* of Nūrpur, the walls of which are covered with paintings[61].

The state of Chambā is also important from the point of view of art in this region. The Chambā state *vaṁśāvalīs* (genealogical lists) record a continuous rule by Chambā *rājās* for more than a thousand years down to the reign of Jahāngīr. Its long political stability may have been the reason why one witnesses here a more or less unbroken tradition of art activity from about the eighth-ninth century onwards. Umed Singh who came to power in A.D. 1748 was a powerful ruler who consolidated the kingdom. A great builder, he built the Khem Chandī portion of the present palace of the Chambā[62] *rājās* as well as a palace at Nāḍa. The Rangmahal murals are sometimes attributed to his patronage. It seems more probable, on stylistic grounds, when compared with the earlier schools that they were executed in the reign of Srī Singh who ascended the throne in A.D. 1844.

According to local tradition, Kulū originally bore the name of Kulāntapiṭha, meaning 'the end of the habitable world'. Rājā Jagat Singh (A.D. 1637-72) was one of the most notable chiefs who was followed in succession by Bidhī Singh, Mān Singh, Rāj Singh, Jai Singh and Teḍhī Singh. Prītam Singh succeeded in A.D. 1767 and he is considered to be the *rājā* who is seen paying homage to Trīpurāsundarī on the wall of his palace, in the work known as the Kulū Devī mural[63].

Mañḍī was a small state in the neighbourhood of Kulū. It rose to prominence with the reign of Sidh Sen who ascended the throne in A.D. 1684. He was followed by Shamsher Sen and Ishwarī Sen. During the latter's reign, Mañḍī was invaded by Rājā Sansār Chand of Kāngrā and the king of Mañḍī was arrested. He was succeeded by Zālim Sen and Balbīr Sen. The Sikhs became very aggressive in Balbīr Sen's time; it was during his reign that the rapid decline of Mañḍī began. Balbīr Sen was interested in the art of painting; Vigne, a traveller who visited Mañḍī during his time, states that the *rājā's* palace "had lately been fitted up and painted in the Indian fashion in fresco on a snow-white wall[64]".

The Simlā hill states of this time were those of the kings of Bilāspur, Bashahr, Keonthal, Baghal, Bhagat, Jubbal and twelve other smaller princely states. Almost all of them were very small and, jealous of one another, often fought with each other, but all of them took lead in cultural matters from the Kāngrā group of states. The *rājās* of Bilāspur, Bashahr and Baghal are traditionally known to have been patrons of the art of painting.

By about the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the Sikhs were threatening the hill states of the Western Himālayas. In A.D. 1783, Forster,[65] a British traveller, remarked that "the people of the area were afraid of the *Siques* who were already showing a lot of confidence and

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arrogance". The hill states first came into contact with the Sikhs during the time of Gurū Gobind Singh[66] and then again when Jassā Singh Rāmgarhiā, Jai Singh Kanhaiyā and Mahā Singh Sukarchakiā, chiefs of Sikh *misls*, tried to extend their sway in the hills[67]. Jassā Singh occupied the Kāngrā fort and made Ghamanḍ Chand his tributary in A.D. 1770[68]. With the rise of Sansār Chand, however, Sikh influence declined in the hills, until his over-ambition brought them back. After Sansār Chand's attack on the state of Kalhur, the hill *rājās* combined against him and invited Amar Singh Thāpā, a Gorkhā general, to come and invade Kāngrā[69]. He caused so much devastation and desolation to Sansār Chand's kingdom that the latter, out of sheer desperation, in A.D. 1809 appealed to Ranjīt Singh for help and succour[70]. Sansār Chand had to give the Kāngrā fort and sixty-six villages to Ranjīt Singh in return for his help.

To Ranjīt Singh "the Rājpūts were an object of special aversion for they represented the ancient aristocracy of the country and declined to countenance an organisation in which high caste counted for nothing; their existence, therefore, could not be tolerated and they were mercilessly crushed"[71].

Under Ranjīt Singh the hill states seem to have come for the first time under direct alien rule. The Mughals had only established their political paramountcy but the Sikhs not only imposed direct political control but also annexed a number of states to their kingdom. This weakened the hill states to a considerable extent and eventually paved the way for the total annexation of most of them by the British, the rulers being left only with small *jāgīrs* (estates). It may be stated that Sikh rule had practically no impact on the artistic development of this region. The Sikhs were less artistically inclined than the Rājpūts of the hills, who had, therefore, a cultural superiority complex *vis-a-vis* the Sikhs. The art of the Western Himālayas, consequently, suffered during the Sikh rule. With the decline of political power of the hill states, their patronage of the arts also declined. The only influence on Pahāḍī painting of Sikh political supremacy was the fact that a few Sikh symbols appear in later Pahāḍī paintings—for example, in some of the Damtāl, Dharamsāl and Dādā Sibā paintings; human figures acquire beards even when they were not traditionally supposed to have them. On the other hand, the Sikhs could not escape from the refining influence of the Rājpūts. Gradually, Ranjīt Singh and his Governor of Kāngrā began to patronise artists which gave rise to the so-called Sikh school of painting in which a few Sikh symbols were introduced[72], but basically the paintings remained Pahāḍī in character.

In all these hill states the *rājā* or the king was the head, the fountain source and the dispenser of everything in life, temporal and spiritual. A study of the prevalent concept of kingship in this region reveals that "the authority of the *rājās* was of a three-fold nature—religious, venerated as divine, either in his own right or as vice-regent of the national god. He was supreme and sole owner of the soil, the fountain from which issued the right of the cultivator to a share of the produce, and he was the ruler and master of his subjects who owed him personal allegiance[73]." They believed that God helped them with special favours and enabled them to found dynasties. This belief in supernatural help is mentioned in the case of Rājā Behangnāmī who founded the Pāl dynasty in Kulū[74]. There are also cases of *rājās* who thought that God was the supreme ruler and they were only the executors of His will. Rājā Jagat Singh of Kulū performed a *yajña* and formally gave his realm to Raghunāthjī, considering himself as his vice-regent[75]. *Rājadroha* or treason was considered to be the greatest offence. The *rājā* was the fountain-head of justice[76].

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In spite of the absolute power enjoyed by the *rājās*, most of them ruled justly as benevolent despots and were dearly loved by their people. Rājā Jagat Singh and Rājā Bir Singh of Nūrpur, for example, had won the hearts of their people and commanded absolute loyalty and devotion from them when they fought against Jahāngir and Ranjit Singh respectively. Rājā Balbhadra and Charat Singh of Chambā were known for their piety, generosity and good administration[77]. The aristocracy acted as a check on the despotic exercise of power by the *rājās*. Rājā Udai Singh (A.D. 1690) of Chambā was killed by an aristocratic clique because he had given himself up completely to sensual pleasures, leaving the administration of the state to a barber who was the father of a girl with whom Udai Singh had fallen in love[78].

Almost all the *rājās* had loosely organised burea cracies. They were headed by the *wazīr* who was invariably very influential. Nathū, *wazīr* of Chambā during the time of Ranjit Singh, played a very important part in saving his state from complete annexation by the Sikhs.

This type of patriarchical government, with most of the powers concentrated in the hands of the kings, did not have large financial resources. Chambā had a revenue of Rs. 4 lakhs in the seventeenth century. According to Forster, who travelled through Nūrpur in A.D. 1783[79], the revenue of Nūrpur state was about four lakhs of rupees annually. Similarly, Moorcroft, who visited Sansār Chānd of Kāngrā, mentions that his annual revenue during the period of his ascendancy was Rs. 35 lakhs[80]. This was later on reduced to Rs. 70,000 for personal expenditure, after paying the troops. The material resources of the states were thus quite limited.

The concentration of political power in their hands enabled the *rājās* to patronise artistic activity but at the same time their limited economic resources made it impossible for them to do this on a grand scale. The wall paintings of the Western Himālayas are also accordingly found in a few centres alone and confined to a few rooms only at each centre.

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Plate I

Ṭhākurdvārā, Nūrpur

'Women in Kaṁsa's palace.'

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2

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MILIEU

ART CONTENT AND sometimes even art forms are directly or indirectly conditioned by the social and economic milieu in which they are born. First, art content draws in elements also from contemporary social life and environment, either in a descriptive manner or symbolically. Secondly, the manner of living, doing and thinking may also condition the form—the use of colour, for instance—and the character of the composition. The wall paintings of the Western Himālayas were created in a society at the apex of which was the *rājā* and a feudal aristocracy. The common people were agro-pastoral, and their social and economic conditions were regulated from the top downwards.

The social order was not only upheld by the kings but also regulated by them. The king was the arbiter of the caste system as well. In fact, he could change the caste of individuals and of whole tribes[1]. He could even admit back in caste fellowship such persons as had been expelled from the caste for a grave act of defilement.

The frequent visits of the hill *rājās* to the courts of the Mughal emperors made them conscious of the luxury, grandeur and magnificence of their courtly way of life and they could not but feel impressed[2]. The hill *rājās* were also impressed by the Mughal patronage of learning and the arts, which were also considered as significant status symbols. It was in the logic of things that they would try to emulate the Mughals. But they were chiefs of small states and their means were very limited. Naturally, they could not even dream of organising art activities and patronising them on a large scale, though they cared but little in squandering whatever little resources they had in the pursuit of pleasure. Literary sources indicate that they used to spend their time in drinking, dance and music and a general atmosphere of licentiousness[3]. Bihārī's *dohā* (couplet) quoted below illustrates this aspect of their lives:

प्रतिबिम्बित जय साहि दुति, दीपति दरपन धाम ।
सबु जगु जीतन कौ कर्‌यो, काय ब्यूहु मनु काम ॥

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Bihārī says in the *dohā* that the reflection of Rājā Jai Singh in the mirror shines so gloriously that it lends lustre to the mirror itself and it appears that Kāmadeva has himself entered into this glory in order to reflect through Jai Singh[4]. The fact that considerable luxury was the order of the day is also indicated by the accounts of foreign travellers. Moorcroft[5] writes that Sansār Chand used to devote his evenings to singing and dancing. Jacquemont[6] describes the *rājā* of Nāhan as "a handsome young man of twenty-two with the elegant manners of high bred Indians in the plains and frank, active and communicative like the hill people". He also says that Sansār Chand had a large *zanānā* (harem) which was accommodated in a huge building. He states further that the *rājā* of Bilāspur devoted almost his whole time to the pursuit of pleasure. Vigne[7] gives a vivid description of the court of Rājā Charat Singh of Chambā, which again emphasises the fact that the *rājās* lived a leisurely life in which there was enough time for music, dancing and painting.

A life of luxury pursued by the higher strata of society presupposes a whole class of performers and entertainers. For instance, about Rājā Sansār Chand, who epitomises luxurious living among the hill *rājās* of his times, Ghulām Mohiuddīn writes[8]: "For many years he passed his days in great felicity. He was generous in conduct, kind to his subjects, just as Naushirvān, and a second Akbar in the recognition of men's good qualities. Crowds of people of skill and talent, professional soldiers and others, resorted to Kāngrā and gained happiness from his gifts and favours. Those addicted to pleasure, who live for the gratification of others, flocked from all quarters and profited exceedingly by his liberality. Performers and story-tellers collected in such numbers, and received such gifts and favours at his hands, that he was regarded as the Hātim of that age and, in generosity, the Rustam of that time..." He also settled in Sujānpur Tīrā goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters and carpet makers[9].

Gifted artists flocked to the courts of the hill *rājās* who also made conscious attempts to enlist their services. Patronage of the arts owed a great deal to the aesthetic sensibilities of the *rājās*; it was also an ostensible symbol of political status, social and cultural prestige and awareness. Almost all the hill *rājās* built temples and palatial buildings. It is known that Rājā Sansār Chand of Kāngrā was a great builder and many palaces in his state were beautified and embellished by him[10]. He also laid a number of gardens, the most beautiful of which was the garden at Ālampur which is said to have rivalled the Shālimār gardens of Lāhore. Nadaun, his capital during the earlier days of his reign, was so grand that there was a common saying in the hills :

जायगा नदौन आयेगा कौन।

This meant that visitors to Nadaun found it difficult to leave, which is perhaps explained by the fact that there were two hundred singing and dancing girls over there and whoever came under their spell never liked to leave the place[11].

What is more important from the point of view of art activity is the fact that Sansār Chand maintained a large *atelier* of painters in his court. Moorcroft writes : " Sansār Chand is fond of drawing and has many artists in his employ. He has a large collection of pictures but the greater part represent the feats of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, the adventures of Arjuna and subjects from the Mahābhārata. It also includes portraits of many of the neighbouring *rājās* and their predecessors[12]." Sansār Chand was also the patron of the wall paintings of the Gaurīśankara temple in Sujānpur Tīrā and the *Śivālaya* in Nadaun, whereas one of his queens commissioned the wall paintings of the Narmadeśvara temple in Sujānpur Tīra. Rājā Prītam Singh of Kulū is supposed to be the *rājā* who is seen standing in front of Tripurāsundarī in the Kulū Devī

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mural which helps one to assume that either he, or one of his successors, must have been a patron of the Devī mural. Similarly, the Nūrpur *rājās* commissioned the wall paintings of the *Ṭhākurdvārā* in the Nūrpur fort. The *rājā* of Sirmūr is supposed to have been the patron of the Maṇī Mājrā temple wall paintings. The *rājā* of Mañḍi is also thought to have been fond of paintings and a patron of art, but we have no reliable evidence in this regard.

As most of the wall paintings were the works of artists who were evidently employed by the kings (and their courts), they were bound to be guided in their choice of subject-matter by the tastes of their royal patrons. Royalty, as we have seen, lived in those days a life of luxury and amorous indulgence and any artistic expression reminiscent of such a mode of life would naturally be to their liking. Their choice, therefore, fell on the use of religious themes and symbols which the people would accept and which, at the same time, would offer a vicarious outlet to their own desires. The artists, therefore, hit upon the idea of illustrating most of their paintings with Kṛṣṇa Līlā and Rāma Līlā themes which had a popular religious sanction as Keśavadās writes in his *Rasikapriyā*[13]:

"श्री वृषभानु-कुमारि हेतु शृङ्गार रूप मय।
वास दास रस दरे, मात वंदन करुणामय॥
केशी प्रति अति रौद्र, वीर मार्‌यो वत्सासुर।
भव दावानल पान कियो, वीभत्स बकी उर॥
अति अद्‌भुत वंचि विरंचि मति, शांत संतते शोच चित।
कहि केशव सेवहु रसिक जन, नवरस मय ब्रजराज नित॥"

Keśavadās says that all aesthetically inclined people should serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who was the beloved of Rādhā, who produced laughter when he stole the clothes of *gopīs*, who stirred the emotion of sympathy when he was tied as a child by Yaśodā, who appeared in his heroic form while destroying Vakāsura and Pūtanā and who evoked the feeling of surprise at the time of *vastraharaṇa*. There is no wonder, therefore, that the artists concentrated on portraying the lives of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, thus finding a vicarious outlet for their feelings. While painting conventional religious themes on the walls of temples, the artists took pleasure in illustrating court life. Perhaps they were inspired in doing the latter by the counterpart of episodes in the lives of the hill *rājās*, the princes and the nobles.

The artist drew heavily from the life and doings of their royal patrons; the royal princes and nobles were eager to leave a record of the grandeur of their courts for posterity. Thus we find that while painting the scenes of the court of Daśaratha on the walls of the Narmadeśvara temple, the artist has devoted five or six panels in depicting scenes of dancing, music and festivities which were presumably inspired by the court of Rājā Sansār Chand. In the Gaurīśaṅkara temple also, the artists, at the request of Sansār Chand himself, painted scenes showing his dalliance with Jamālo, the favourite mistress of his last days with whom he had shut himself up in this palace. The picture of the palace of Kaṁsa (Fig. 1) in the *Ṭhākuradvārā* of Nūrpur shows elaborate seating arrangements, the ladies of the palace look upon the scene from the palace windows; the *rājā* is seated on a high pedestal; below him are his nobles, many of them in full armour; then come the court poets and learned men; and last of all, the musicians. This indicates not only the grandeur of Kaṁsa's *darbār* but also an awareness of the protocol as observed in the local *darbārs*.

Before the Rājpūt rulers had established themselves in the Western Himālayas, this region was ruled by the *ṭhākurs* and the *rāṇās*[14]. They were gradually replaced by the Rājpūts who

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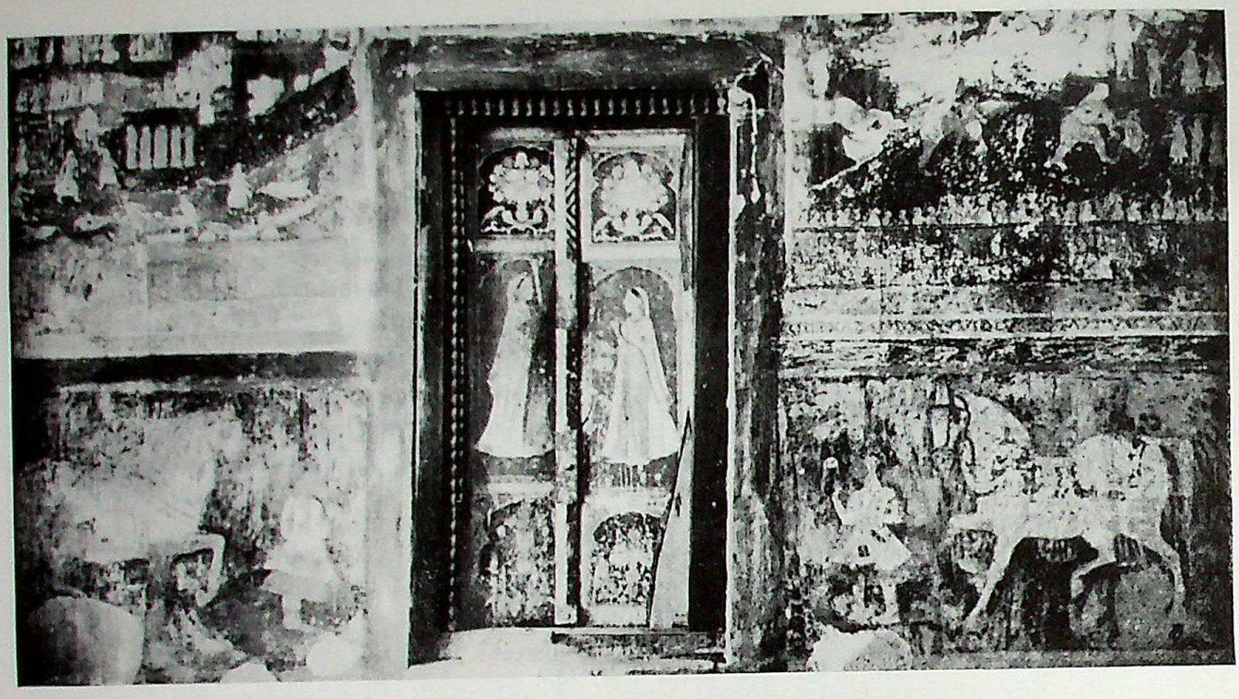

Fig. 1 *Nūrpur, Ṭhākurdvārā —'Kaṁsa's darbār.'*

were mostly the collaterals of the ruling class. They lived like *jāgīrdārs* or landlords and were not supposed to follow the occupations of ploughing, animal husbandry or trade for fear of losing caste[16]. The lower castes tilled the soil while the Rājpūts themselves imitated the life of the *rājās*. They were especially fond of the pleasures of hunting and war. In their manners, deportment and character they epitomised the medieval ideals of chivalry and romanticism in love, with a fondness for amorous dances and music and passion for women. They built palaces, gardens and small temples and were also great patrons of miniature painting. There is no evidence, however, of Rājpūt patronage of the wall paintings found in this area. However, their fondness for art in general and their love for chivalry and romance may have inspired the artists. Illustrations of Rājpūt cavalry and elephants going out to war can be seen in Nadaun (Fig. 2) and also in Narmadeśvara. There may not be any doubt that the Rājpūts helped to contribute towards the romantic and lyrical character of the wall paintings of this region.

Large Vaiṣṇava religious *maṭhas*, although not important from the point of view of caste, had a significant place in the social and religious life of the region. It was to the *maṭhas* that the common people and sometimes even *rājās* came for religious instruction. The *maṭhas* used to celebrate religious festivals on a large scale when religious discourses were held. These festivals were great social events in which all classes of people participated. During the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the *maṭhas* accumulated great wealth derived very largely from private charities. In the general atmosphere of patronage of artistic activity, the *maṭhas* also thought of adding prestige and dignity to their foundations by patronising the arts. Two of the oldest *maṭhas* in this area found at Damtāl and Piṇḍori in Gurdāspur district are embellished with beautiful wall paintings.

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While in the plains the Brahmins were considered to be at the head of the caste organisation, in the Western Himālayas their position was rather below that of the princes and the Rājpūts, namely of the Kshatriyas. Here they did not enjoy the same degree of importance and prestige as they did in the plains. This may be due to the fact that even in Rājasthān itself, from where most of these princes came, the Kshatriyas occupied a more important position in the social, political and economic hierarchy. The classification of various castes, made by the ruling prince on the advice of his religious advisers, was supposed to be binding on the community[17].

Interesting illustrations of the position of the Brahmins are seen in the Kulū Devī mural. In it the Brahmins are shown in humorous poses with

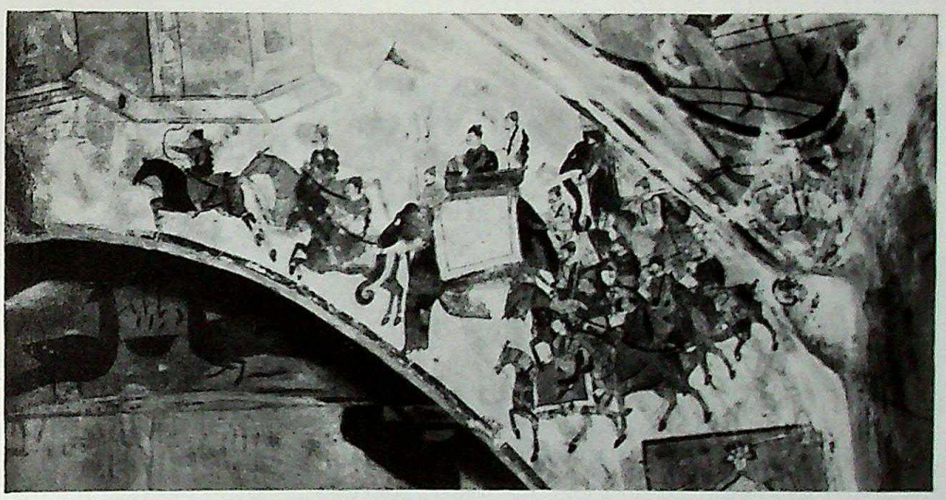

Fig. 2 *Nadaun, Śivālaya —'A Rājpūt army setting out for war.'*

bloated paunches, discussing the sacred books with each other; the princes are also shown as if they were equally learned. *Sādhūs* and *sannyāsīs* were not unknown in this society, but from the paintings it seems that they were not given undue importance; they are shown carrying on their ordinary human avocations—eating, washing, or shivering in front of a fire in the Kulū Devī mural (Fig. 3) as if to show that they were ordinary mortals and no special dignity attached to them. There are no instances to show that they patronised the art of painting. Their weak social and economic position perhaps made it impossible for them to do so.

At the bottom of the social order were what we call in modern terminology the 'common people'. They consisted of roughly four castes—the

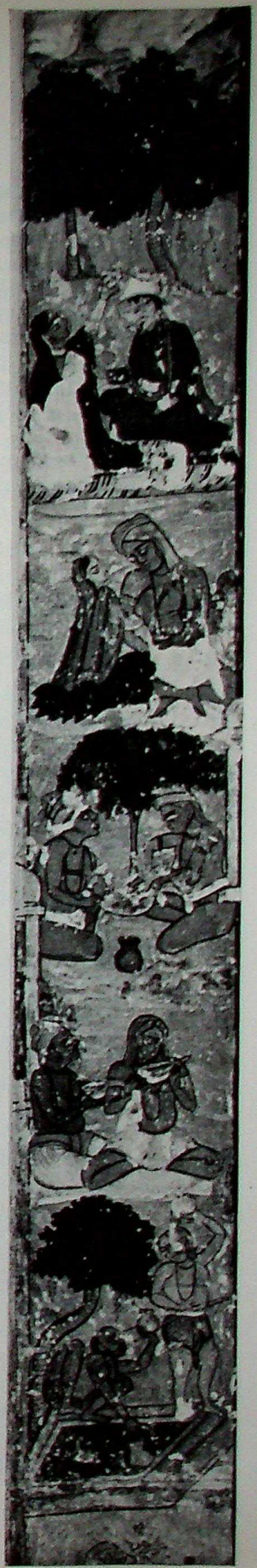

Fig. 3 *Kulū, Sultānpur Palace—'Sādhūs attending to the mundane needs of life.'*

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Ghirths, Kānets, Gosāins and the menials. Ghirths and the Kānets formed the backbone of the rural economy as they were responsible for the cultivation of the soil. They were also recruited in large numbers in the hill armies.

The Gosāins were the most well-known of the commercial castes who were found settled principally in the neighbourhood of Jvālāmukhī and Nadaun. They were supposed to be *sannyāsīs* but in actual practice they owned land and also engaged in commerce, having a monopoly of the opium trade. They were the money-lending castes and often lent money to the *rājās* for their military or building activities. They were considered so low in social status that they did not have any say in moulding tastes.

There were also many menial castes like the Chamārs, Jhewārs, Kolīs, Dāgīs and Chānds who generally used to work as domestic servants for the higher castes or carried on lowly occupations. They were also employed as labourers and artisans in the villages.

The Gaddīs and the Gūjars were pastoral and nomadic tribes who were considered outside the pale of the caste system and ranked slightly above the menial castes in the social order. The handsome Gaddīs belonged to a Hindu tribe; they maintained that their ancestors originally came from the Punjāb during the time of the Mohammedan invasions. The Gūjars were generally Muslims by religion. Both these tribes were extremely poor.

Although the common people were handsome, they do not seem to have inspired actual physical portrayal in the paintings. Members of the royalty and the nobility who were all evidently Rājpūts were the favourite subjects of representation in the paintings by the artists. There are no representations of the Ghirths or Kānets carrying out their agricultural operations, nor are the Gosāins shown in any of the wall paintings of this area. The lower orders of the Chamārs and Jhewārs etc. are shown as *dāsas* and *dāsīs*, *chaurī*-bearers, *māhuts* (elephant drivers) and as foot-soldiers. Their inferior social position is very clearly indicated by the way figures are grouped in the compositions. The leading figure, an aristocratic lady or a *rājā*, is always shown sitting or standing on a higher level than his friends, courtiers and servants. The clothes of the rich

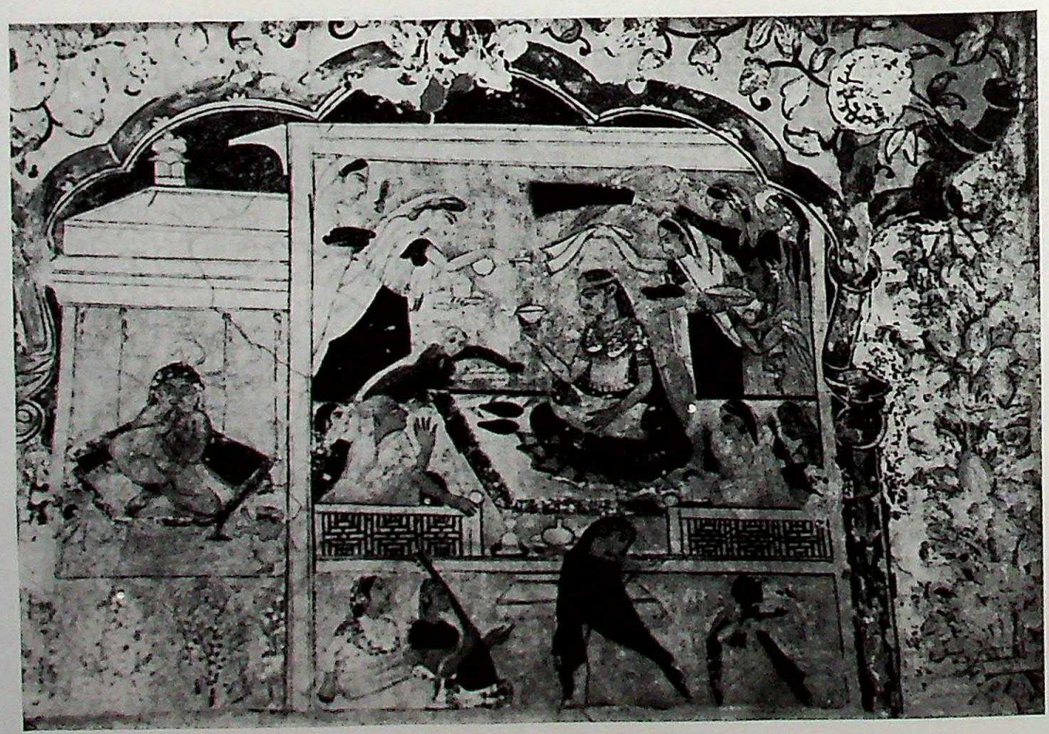

Fig. 4 *Sujānpur Tirā. Narmadeśvara Temple —'The birth of Kṛṣṇa.'*

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are superior and they are always displayed wearing more ornaments than the lower caste people. The *dāsīs* of Yaśodā in a Narmadeśvara painting of Kṛṣṇa's birth (Fig.4) and Rukmiṇī's maids in a Piṇḍorī painting (Plate XV) are shown standing or sitting in lower planes than both these princesses. The clothes worn by the maids are also rougher. The common soldiers, servants and men of other lower castes are often shown in smaller sizes and in darker complexions as compared to the upper castes and classes. The Gaddīs alone among the lower classes have been painted in a separate panel in the Arkī palace (Fig. 5).

The musicians, dancers and entertainers were considered only a little better than menials. This low social standing of the musicians and performers was in conformity with the treatment generally meted out to them all over India. In the Punjāb plains, they were referred to as *Marāsīs* or singers and *nāchne-wāle* or dancers, with whom respectable citizens were not supposed to have any social communication. Wherever singers and dancers are shown in these paintings they are always placed in the composition on a much lower plane than the persons of higher levels of society. In

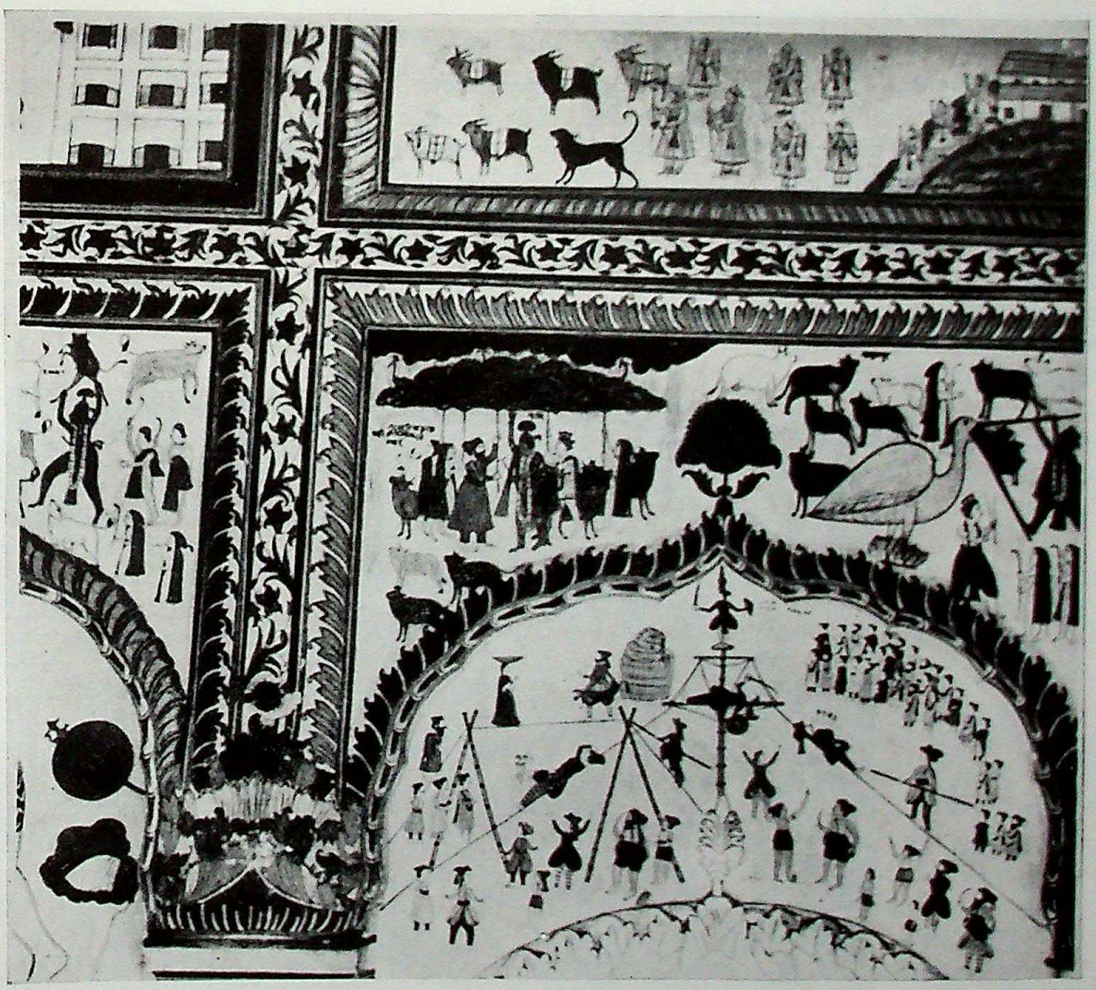

Fig. 5 *Arkī, Rājā's Palace—'Gaddīs travelling' and 'A circus scene.'*

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Kaṁsa's *darbār* scene at Nūrpur (Fig. 1) the musicians and trumpeteers are located in a separate compartment which is at a respectable distance from the courtiers.

Although, the pursuits of the common people as such are not generally portrayed in the Pahāḍī wall paintings it cannot be denied that the way of life of the masses also had some influence on this art. Rural-pastoral themes have found a place in the wall paintings partly due to the fact that the artists came from a rural society, although, primarily, this was due to the reason that the Rādhā Kṛṣṇa legend enjoyed such a wide popularity among the Rājpūt ruling and military classes, that the rural-pastoral life of Mathurā and Vṛndāvana came inevitably to be considered as a theme of loving interest. The artists have handled the scenes connected with this theme with a great deal of care and fondness. This is especially evident in the tenderness and delicacy of feeling shown by the artists in the painting of cows. The naturalistically treated cows of the various illustrations of the *Govardhanadhāraṇa* theme from Kṛṣṇa's life as at Chambā (Plate XXV) could not have been painted in any society but a pastoral-agricultural one, in which the rural people looked after their cows like their own children. The illustration of simple huts and small houses of the poor people are also representative of rural life.

The colourful life of the common people seems also to have influenced the content and composition of the wall paintings of this region. For instance, the common man in the hills is gay, light-hearted, fond of music and dancing and of fairs and festivals; the artists seem to have taken some delight in presenting this aspect of their social environment. In quite a few of the paintings people are shown as dancing and singing and playing on instruments in front of the rulers. The favourite dance seems to have been Kathak and most of the court scenes show women Kathak dancers. It seems that men were also fond of dancing as seen from the painting of the vigorous stick dancers of Dharamsāl (Fig. 6). *Ḍholak*, *tānpurā*, trumpet, cymbals and *sārangī* appear to have been the most

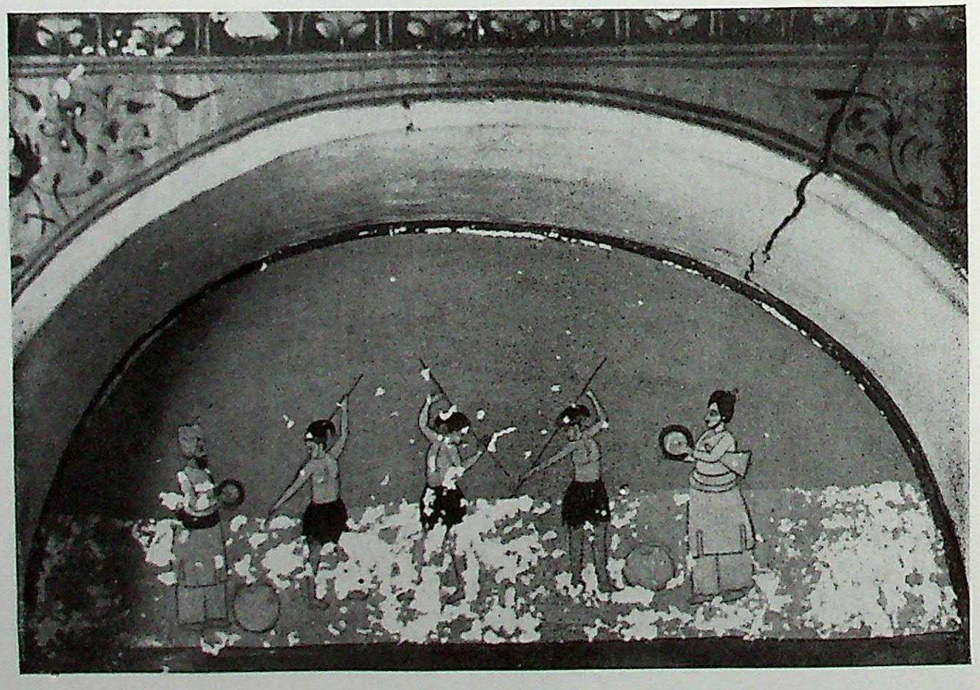

Fig. 6 *Dharamsāl Mahañtañ— 'Stick dancers.'*

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popular musical instruments as seen from their illustrations found in the Nūrpur wall paintings of Kaṁsa's *darbār* (Fig. 1). Holī, the spring festival of colours, seems to have been a popular theme in many paintings, at Rangmahal palace, Chambā, and in Dādā Sibā, for instance. Other popular festivals were Śivarātrī, Pūrṇimās, Nāga Pañchamī, Janmāṣṭmī, Dussehra and Lohrī[18].

It is somewhat strange that despite there being considerable manufacture and trade of handicrafts, nowhere in these paintings does one find any portrayal of them. Moorcroft[19] mentions that "the madder grows wild in the vicinity of Joshimaṭh... and it is used by the Bhoṭiās to dye the coarse woollen clothes manufactured in the mountains ... Hemp grows freely in the valleys and on the slopes of the mountains. It affords a strong fine fibre and is worked by the natives into a course canvas and into thread and rope. Wax, tar, pitchy resin and turpentine are all available in any quantity". He also refers to bee-keeping, flax-growing and manufacture of fine cloth and shawls and the working of salt mines at Mañḍī. But none of the commercial pursuits interested the artists even though the route to Śrīnagar, Ladākh and Tibet lay through the hills and there was an extensive trade carried on in exporting wool and woollen goods, musk, opium and shawls and industrial goods on this route. Foreign travellers have also left accounts of the bustling bazars at Nadaun, Nūrpur, Mañḍī and Kulū[20].

It is perhaps of some interest to note that although the society of the Western Himālayas was very slow-moving and traditional, it was not as rigid and orthodox and as lacking in social mobility as contemporary Hindu society in the plains. The relative flexibility of the social system was perhaps due to three important factors : first, the prerogative of the *rājās* to change the caste group to which a person belonged; secondly, the flexible marriage customs; and thirdly, mobility in the pursuit of various professions[21]. Marriage customs permitted the taking of brides from a caste one step lower than one's own and the giving of a daughter in marriage to the same or a higher caste. In the course of a few generations the descendants of a son of a Śudra woman from a Brahmin father could aspire to becoming a Brahmin. Change of occupation also resulted in change of caste. According to Barnes, the Rājpūt families of Kutlehar and Bangahal were originally of Brahmin stock but when they started ruling they became Rājpūts, that is, Kshatriyas. It was common for a whole tribe to rise or fall in the caste ladder if it changed its occupation[22].

Mukandī Lāl and Kārl Khandelwālā have argued[23] that the artists in these hill states came predominantly from the *svarṇkāra* or goldsmith caste. Goswāmi[24], on the other hand, has sought to prove that most of the Pahāḍī artists, at any rate from the later half of the eighteenth century onwards, hailed from a single family whose progenitor was Pañḍit Seu, a painter belonging to the *tarkhān* or carpenter caste, and that they were all residents of Guler. This is not borne out by the evidence of the artists of the wall paintings. Unfortunately, although sufficient evidence does not exist to indicate definitely the names of the various artists who were responsible for the different centres of wall paintings, local art tradition points to the probability that they came from different castes. The priests of the Narmadeśvara and the Gaurīśaṅkara temples claim that the artists of these two temples came from Delhi, but they do not claim to know their castes. Another local tradition attributes the paintings of these two temples to a family of Bujherū Brahmins who usually lived by begging alms on Saturdays alone but who in this instance were painters as well. The paintings on the walls of the Nūrpur fort are traditionally associated with an artist whose name was Golū and who was a *tarkhān* by caste. The paintings at Pinḍorī and Damtāl, accor-

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ding to a local legend, are supposed to have been executed by Vaiṣṇava *vairāgīs* or monks who had renounced the world. The painter responsible for the Dharamsāl paintings is supposed to have been a *mistrī* or mason. Thus whatever little proof is available indicates that the artists of the wall paintings came from different castes.

There is no evidence to indicate that the artists in these hill states were organised into guilds during this period. It is, however, likely that a person did not take to the vocation of an artist simply because he felt inspired to do so; in most cases it must have been a hereditary skill, in that of others just another skill to be learnt and practised. The family of the painter Golū of Nūrpur is said to have practised the art of painting for generations. Similarly the family of the Bujherū Brahmins of Sujānpur is said to have been responsible for the Narmadeśvara and Gaurīśaṅkara paintings. This family has been found to be practising art right up to the twentieth century.

In traditional Indian society the social position of the artists was always rather low. The situation in the hills was not different. In a few portraits of the artists found in miniatures in the collection of the Punjāb Museum, Chandīgarh, they are always shown in humble poses standing with folded hands or looking shyly at the ground. Painters who came from the lower caste of carpenters, masons or goldsmiths usually had to content themselves with very meagre allowances, either in cash or in kind or in both from their patrons. Some of the hereditary families of painters were, however, given small grants of land by the *rājās* who employed them. A few artists like Paṇḍit Narotam of Mañḍī and Molā Rām of Garhwāl lived, however, in comparative affluence.

The position of women and the ideals of womanhood held by the society were very important social factors influencing the artistic activity of the region. The artist does not derive a purely aesthetic enjoyment in painting woman—one of the most beautiful creations of nature—but he also shows his social consciousness by the type of woman he depicts in his paintings. As royalty was the patron of the art of the Western Himālayas, the artist was bound to be influenced by the ideals of womanhood held by the ruling and the upper classes. The upper classes paid lip service and homage to the divine in woman as shown in the numerous illustrations of Mahiṣamardinī Devī in Shogī (Fig. 7), *Śivālāya* of Nadaun, Maṇī Mājrā and Tripurāsundarī in the Kulū Devī mural (Plate XVIII) but after the artist came down from the cosmic contemplation of woman as *devī*, he saw that the kind of woman who was admired and appreciated by his patrons was very different. Here, the upper classes regarded the acquisition of women on the same level as the acquisition of palaces, forts and territories. This attitude is seen in the Narmadeśvara panels which show Rājā Śriyans saving his head by giving his daughter to Rājā Risālū. Infanticide was also commonly practised in this region[25]. When a girl grew up she was given hardly any education worth the name except in the scriptures and that only if she belonged to the higher castes. The Devī mural has illustrations of learned women holding books in their

Fig. 7 *Shogī, Gopāl Mandir—'Mahiṣamardinī Devī.'*

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hands. In actual practice education seems to have been a rare phenomenon among women. Child marriage was common and all marriages were arranged by the parents[26]. Once a woman was married, her life, especially if she belonged to the upper classes, was difficult as polygamy was the order of the day. A woman had to share her husband's favours not only with co-wives but also with concubines, dancing girls and mistresses called *rakhorār*. Family life was miserable. Jacquemont[27] writes : "Society in the east is vitiated from its very foundations. Its chief element, the family, is almost non-existent. Among the upper classes which set the example for the rest, polygamy makes Indian fathers indifferent to their children."

The fact that polygamy was the order of the day, at least among the upper classes, is seen by the number of queens shown in Rājā Gopī Chand's palace as illustrated in a painting of it found in Narmadeśvara (Plate X). The men among the higher castes kept their wives well guarded in exclusive apartments as seen by the *purdāh* observed in the palaces of Daśaratha and Janaka in Narmadeśvara paintings and in Kaṁsa's palace in Nūrpur (Plate I).

It is common knowledge that in both Rājasthānī and Pahāḍī miniature paintings, there is a great deal of idealisation of romantic love and passion centring round the legend of Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and the *gopīs*, and the themes of *rāgas* and *rāginīs* and of the changes of seasons during the twelve months of the year known as *Bārāmāsās*. One need not go here into the psychological reasons of the origin and evolution of this kind of attitude towards man and woman relations, but it is necessary to point out that, to begin with, these themes were literary in the main and were exploited most by poets and singers. This attitude was characterised on the one hand by a longing for romance in both men and women, which is very understandable in the context of medieval Rājpūt society in which the segregation of the sexes was a dominant feature and which was further characterised by a completely erotic approach in regard to woman's role in man's life. The best literary advocates of these theories were the poets Keśavadās and Bihārī who in their well-known works, the *Rasikapriyā* and the *Satsai* respectively, express *bhaktī* or devotion to God through erotic nuances. The physical attributes of a woman who could embody these concepts were described very well by Bihārī in the following *dohās* :[28]

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कंचनतन-घन-बरन बर रह्यौ रंगु मिलि रंग।
जानी जाति सुबास हीं केसरि लाई अंग ॥(359)

कहा कुसुम, कह कौमुदी, कितक आरसी जोति।
जाकी उजराई लखें, आँखि ऊजरी होति ॥(512)

सोनजुही सी जगमगति, अंग अंग जोबन-जोति।
सुरंग कुसुंभी कंचुकी, दुरंग देह-दुति होति ॥(190)

सनि-कज्जल, चख-झख-लगन-उपज्यौ सुदिन सनेहु।
क्यौं न नृपति ह्वै भोगवै, लहि सुदेश सबु देहु ॥ (5)

त्यौं त्यौं प्यासेई रहत, ज्यौं ज्यौं पियत अघाइ।
सुमन सलोने रूप की, जु न चख-तृषा बुझाइ ॥(417)

लिखन बैठि जाकी सबी, गहि गहि गरब गरूर।
भये न केते जगत के, - चतुर चितेरे कूर ॥(347)

The heroine, or *nāyikā*, according to the above couplets, is one who is fair like glass painted with

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sandal wood paste and fragrant like a lotus flower. She is so fair that the light of the beauty of a flower, of moonlight and of a mirror pales before her. Her youth has given her body a light of its own and when she wears a red veil it seems she is hidden in it like sunlight and shadows. The collyrium she has applied to her eyes is like Saturn and her love would result in the birth of a *rājā* who would rule over the entire country. In short, this heroine is so beautiful that the more one sees of her the more enamoured one's eyes become by looking at her. Her beauty reflects so many changing facets that even the proudest artists are not successful in painting a perfect picture of her.

The countless shades and nuances of love and romance, adventures and escapades, advances and subterfuges were all depicted with obvious enjoyment by these poets. The woman who appealed to the patron of poetry as well as painting was one who not only had the physical attributes mentioned in Bihārī's *dohās*, but who was also proud of her passions, slightly forward and forthcoming and whose only desire and ambition was to indulge in *śṛṅgāra*.

Rājasthānī and Pāhāḍī miniatures have immortalised these moods, feelings and sentiments in variegated colours and compositions—all under the cover of a religious theme and in the name of *bhaktī* or absolute devotional surrender to God. Pahāḍī wall paintings are not so rich and diverse, but, nevertheless, they register an echo of the over-all nostalgia for a love and romance of which the artists and their patrons had not the slightest experience in acutal life. These themes and images were undoubtedly conventional, drawn from earlier miniature paintings and literature, but it was these conventional themes which served as the vehicles of articulation of the amorous desires and romantic nostalgia of the patrons of this art. In Chambā Rangmahal paintings, Rādhā is shown as sometimes annoyed with Kṛṣṇa, at others waiting longingly for him and in many paintings doing her *śṛṅgāra*, often assisted by Kṛṣṇa himself (Fig. 8). In Shogī (Fig. 9) there is a beautiful depiction of a *nāyikā* playing a musical instrument thereby giving vent to her sorrow on being separated from her lover by pouring out her feelings to a deer, the traditional companion of lonely women. On the Kulū Sultānpur palace walls are painted *Khañḍitā* and *Abhisañdhita nāyikās*. Almost all the women painted by artists are beautifully attired, wearing ornaments and make-up. Two fashionable women of Nūrpur (Fig. 10) holding hand bags have great style. Women of the lower castes and classes also make their appearance in some of the wall paintings of the area, mostly incidentally, as maids and attendants. Scenes of singers and dancers are often painted. There is also a snake-charmer in one of the panels at Dharamsāl (Fig. 11). Women soldiers (Fig. 12), scholars and *yoginīs* are found illustrated only in the Kulū Devī mural.

The social and economic picture of the Western Himālayas at the time of the wall paintings discussed in this study reveals a feudal society where all power was concentrated in the hands of the royalty and the nobility. The lower classes did not have any social or economic standing worth mentioning, but the artists came primarily, with but few exceptions, from these classes. They were interested in articulating the tastes and temperaments of their feudal and aristrocatic patrons; even the themes portrayed were of their choice. It was a decaying feudal society, inhibited and rigidly bound by tradition. In art too, they had inherited a tradition and it was their destiny to carry on the tradition with whatever mental, moral and material resources they were yet endowed with. Such a community by its very nature could not have produced a powerful art. But what they did in their modest way, though very much smaller in scale, had its own sweet charm and dignity.

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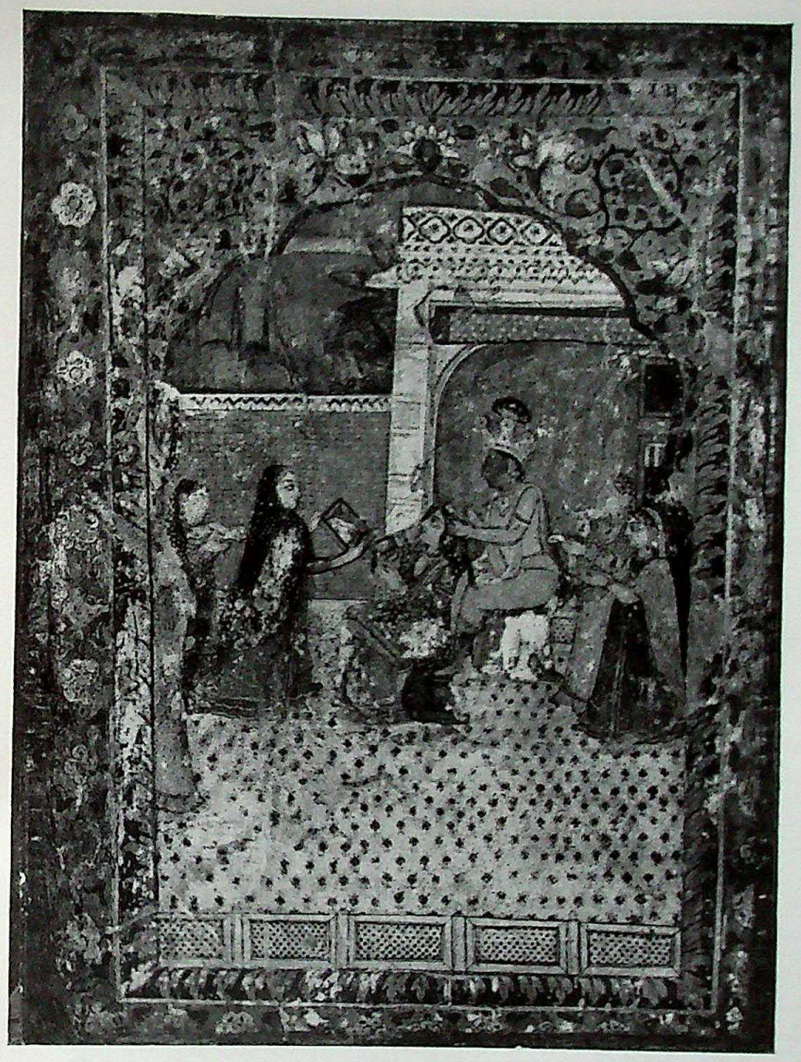

Fig. 8 *Chambā, Rangmahal— 'Kṛṣṇa doing Rādhā's sṛṅgāra.'*

Fig. 9 *Bhogī, Gopāl Mandir—'Ṭoḍi Ragini.'*

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Fig. 10 *Nūrpur, Ṭhākurdwārā—'Two ladies.'*

Fig. 11 *Dharamsāl Mahañtañ—'A snake-charmer.'*

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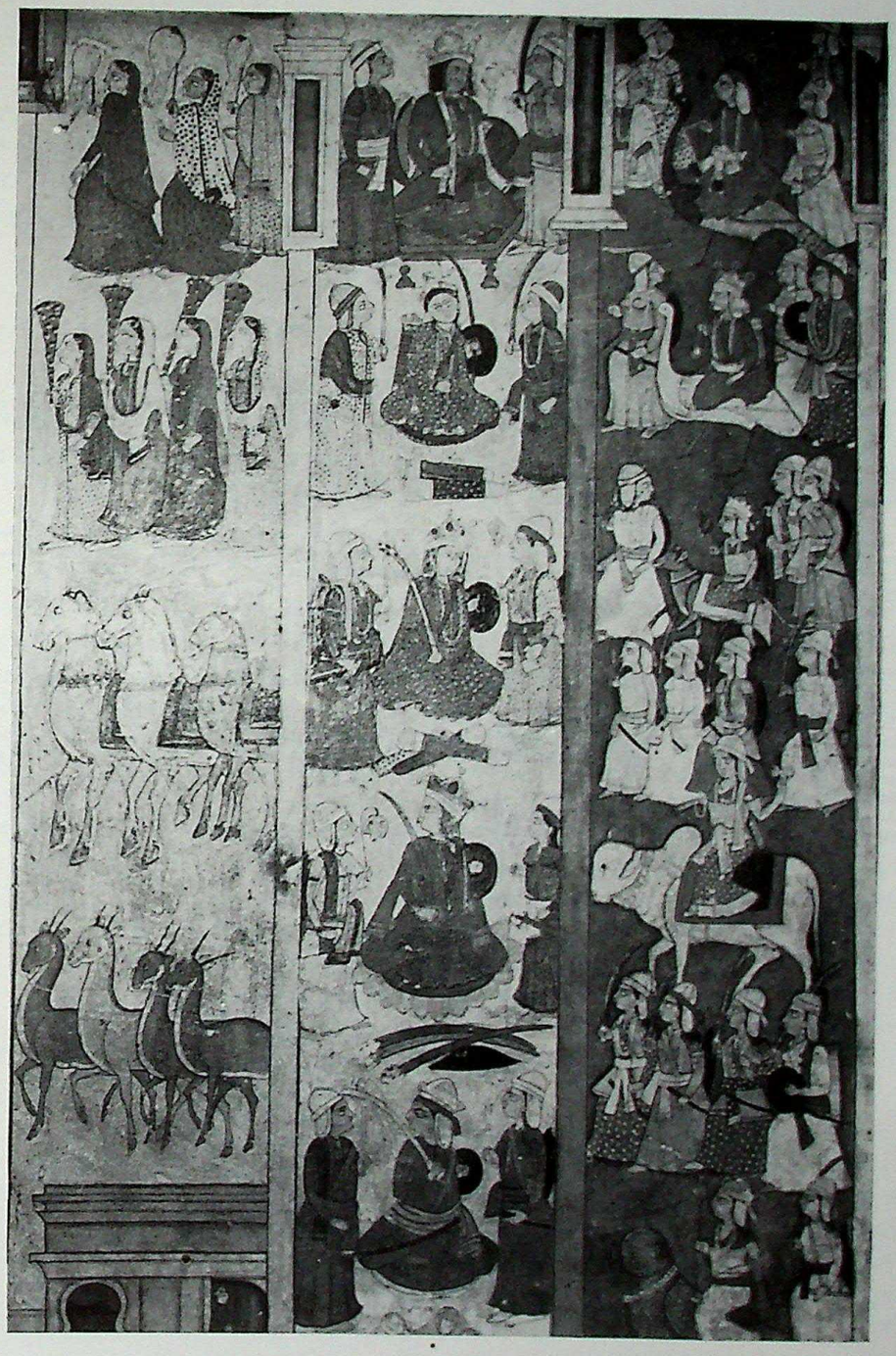

Fig. 12 *Kulū, Sultānpur Palace—'Women soldiers.'*

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3

RELIGION, MYTHS AND LEGENDS

VAIṢṆAVISM WAS THE dominant inspiration of most of the wall paintings of this region. This was not the Vaiṣṇavism of the later Vedic literature of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa[1] or of Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (IV.3,98) who mentions Vāsudeva and Arjuna as Kshatriya heroes[2]. Nor was it the cult of Kṛṣṇa as propounded in the *Bhagvadgītā* from which Kṛṣṇa emerges as an *avatāra* (incarnation) who is born repeatedly to uphold good and destroy evil. The Pahāḍī artists were on the other hand attracted by the Vaiṣṇavism of later Vaiṣṇavite *Purāṇas* mentioning Kṛṣṇa as a playful mischievous boy in the pastoral settlement of *Vraja*[3], and the tales of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. The essence of this cult was the love of Rādhā for Kṛṣṇa, the tales of Kṛṣṇa's boyhood at Vṛndāvana and his fondness for the *gopīs*, all in the context of a rural-pastoral society free from the inhibitions and norms of a society governed by *smārta-paurāṇik* Brahminism. It was the Vaiṣṇavism of the Kṛṣṇa cult which is mentioned in works written after A.D. 1000, beginning from Jayadeva's *Gītagovindam* of the twelfth century, Bhānu Datta's *Rasamañjarī* of the thirteenth, Matī Rām's *Rās Rāj*, Bihārī's *Satsai* of A. D. 1662 and Keśavadas's *Rasikapriyā* of the late sixteenth century. Besides these writers, a group of other poets including Vidyāpatī, Sūrdās, Bansīdhara, Dev Datta, Senāpatī, Sundardās and Tulā Rām contributed a great deal to the popularity of this cult.

In the body of literature just referred to, and in the prevalent Vaiṣṇavism of the times, Kṛṣṇa represented love, passion and devotion as symbols of the final union with God. At this time *prema* (love) and *bhaktī* (devotion), however, were considered to be the most potent ways of realising God. It was also held that this love should be so all-consuming that it would lead the devotee to sacrifice everything for Him. This is best symbolised by the great love saga of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa where Rādhā, a married woman, forgets about her home and family honour and madly loves Kṛṣṇa, who in turn loves her more than anyone else. The moods, feelings and emotions of this love saga were used as an allegory for the soul's longing for God and God's response to it.

There were historical and social reasons for the popularity of this Kṛṣṇa cult. During the

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medieval period domestic morals seem to have become increasingly more and more puritanical. Early marriage, segregation of sexes and polygamy, all tended to exclude romance as an actual experience. Romance had, of necessity, to be expressed through literary and artistic channels. Kṛṣṇa was beyond morals and hence he could give expression to all the romantic longings and passionate desires which normal men could not express as they were generally stifled by social duty, conjugal ethics and family morals[4]. This cult of Vaiṣṇavism was encouraged not only by the *rājās* and the idle rich but also by the religious *maṭhas*. The members of the *maṭhas* started imitating the *rājās*, lost contact with the people and lived a life of luxury[5]. The Vallabha, Mādhava, Chaitanya and Rādhā Vallabha *sampradāyas* all encouraged the *parakīyā bhāva* by condoning a woman's love for a man other than her husband, and for this they found their model in Rādhā who was a *parakīyā nāyikā*[6]. The philosophical content of religion did not interest them and instead they concentrated on rituals and the romantic aspect of Vaiṣṇavism.

Vaiṣṇavism was not an indigenous religion of the Western Himālayas but was introduced from the plains. The most important agency for introducing Vaiṣṇavism into the hills was the Vaiṣṇava *vairāgīs* from the religious *maṭhas* who came here from outside for the purpose of propagating Vaiṣṇavism. Śrī Kṛṣṇadās Piuharī belonging to the Galtā *gaddī* (seat) in Rājasthān and a disciple of Anantānand, one of the disciples of Sant Rāmānand, was one of the most important Vaiṣṇava *vairāgīs* to visit the hills[7]. He converted Bhagwānjī, the founder of the Piṇḍorī *darbār*, and is also said to have gone to Kulū and founded a centre at Nagar. A place where he used to meditate is still shown to visitors as Piuharījī's *guphā* (cave). His disciple Bhagwānjī was originally a Nāthapanthī. His conversion was to have a tremendous impact on the development of Vaiṣṇavism in the hills. Bhagwānjī and his disciple Nārāyāṇajī were able to attract the attention of Emperor Jahāngīr by the display of their spiritual and occult powers. The Emperor gave them a grant of land at Piṇḍorī where Bhagwānjī and Nārāyāṇajī founded a Vaiṣṇava *gaddī* which eventually became a premier seat of Vaiṣṇavism in this area. This *gaddī* won the respect of a large number of hill chiefs, especially those of Chambā, Jaswān, Mankoṭ, Bhandralala and Jammū[8]. It was the Piṇḍorī *gaddī* which established branches at Damtāl during the period of Mahañt Harī Rām in the middle of the tenth century and at Baithū in Guler during the period of Mahañt Rām Dās about A.D. 1736-37[9]. Another *vairāgī* in the hills was Bāwā Banārsī Dās who had come from Jaipur around A.D. 1616 and was responsible for the erection of the tower at Sirmūr. The message of the *vairāgīs* was also propagated by hordes of Brahmin Vaiṣṇava paṇḍits most of whom came from Kāśī and settled down in the hills, sometimes at the invitation of the princes. Harīpur had so many paṇḍits from Vārānasī that the hill people fondly called it the 'little Kāśī'. The family of Paṇḍit Mohan Lāl, *Rājagurū* of Chambā, traces its descent from Vārānasī paṇḍits who came to Chambā in the reign of Gaṇeśavarman[10]. Moorcroft in the nineteenth century found Kāshmīrī paṇḍits at the court of Sansār Chand[11]. Captain Harcourt refers to the paṇḍits at the temple of Nirmand in Kulū as coming from Kāshmīr and Vārānasī[12].

The Rājpūt royal families, almost all of whom came from Rājasthān and Uttar Pradesh, also played a very significant part in introducing Vaiṣṇavism in the hills. The possibility of their inter-marriage with the royalty and the nobility of Rājasthān even after these princes had come to the hills cannot be ruled out. They also went on pilgrimages to Kāśī, Prayāga, Gayā, and Jagannātha[13] and brought back with them not only Vaiṣṇava ideas, myths and legends but also Vaiṣṇava icons. Rājā Jagat Singh of Kulū had Raghunāthjī's image brought from Ayodhyā[14]. The image of Kṛṣṇa in the *Ṭhākurdvāra* at Nūrpur is reported to have been brought from Chitor[15]. Furthermore, the *rājās* by employing paṇḍits from outside who used to recite Vaiṣṇava

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poetry, hold religious recitals (*kathās*) in *Braj Bhāṣā*, and sing Vaiṣṇava songs at the court, helped a great deal towards the propagation of Vaiṣṇavism in the hills.

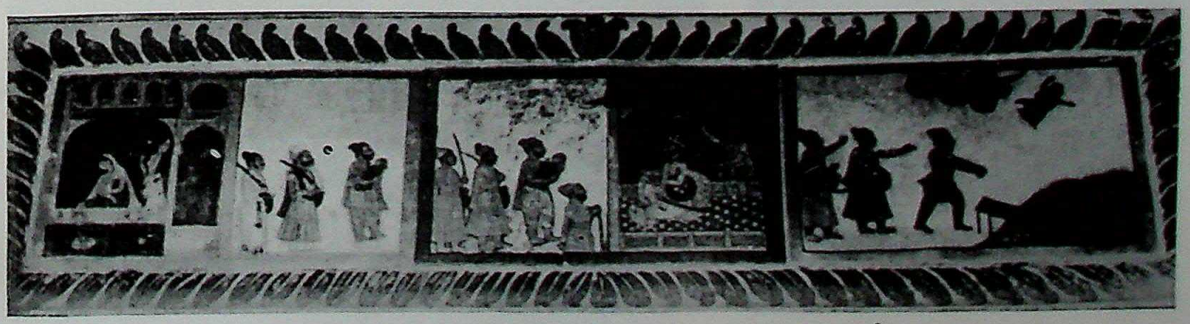
A third important category of persons who were responsible for the spread of Vaiṣṇavism were the princes and people of Rājasthān who came as pilgrims to the hills and made donations to temples and to the families of Vaiṣṇava pañḍits. Dr. Vogel found a copper plate in Chambā bearing the date Saṁvat 1662 (A.D. 1605) which was issued by a *mahārāṇā*[16]. The name of the *mahārāṇā* is not clear on the inscription, but another cognate plate of Saṁvat 1669 (A.D. 1612) carrying the emblem of the *rāṇās* of Udaipur seems to indicate that it was issued by Rāṇā Amar Singh of Udaipur who gave a grant of land to a pañḍit whose appointment is recorded. Many pilgrims came to the hills to pay homage at the shrine of Śiva in Baijnāth and at the Devī temples at Kāngrā, especially the one at Jvālāmukhī. A copper plate of Saṁvat 1702 (A.D. 1645) mentions the visit of Māharājā Jaswant Singh Raṭhor of Jodhpur to the Jvālāmukhī temple. There can hardly be any doubt that these pilgrims helped the propagation of Vaiṣṇavism to some extent.

The *rājās* as well as the Vaiṣṇava *maṭhas* seem to have welcomed the new cult of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa for more than one reason. First, the *rājās*, princes and nobles found in it an outlet for their emotional yearnings and romantic aspirations; secondly, those who were religiously inclined found in it an outlet for their devotional instincts; and thirdly, here was a theme for articulation in art, which had the support of traditional sanctity for several centuries, especially in courtly circles. Much more than courtly miniature paintings, paintings on the walls served as a powerful medium for the dissemination of religious ideas and almost all the important temples and palaces of the Western Himālayas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were, therefore, covered by their patrons with illustrations of Vaiṣṇava legends.

The depiction of Vaiṣṇava themes found in these wall paintings can be grouped according to the various myths and legends associated with the life of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. Illustrations of the Kṛṣṇa legend are based on the legend as narrated in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and partly also as narrated in contemporary *Rīti Kāla* poetry.

The story of the birth of Kṛṣṇa at the house of his parents, Vāsudeva and Devakī, of his being sent across the Yamunā to the house of Nanda and Yaśodā to keep the child away from the murderous designs of Kaṁsa, and Kaṁsa's dashing to pieces the baby girl who had been smuggled into the prison and passed on as the newly born daughter of Devakī—these episodes in their entirety have been painted in a set of three long narrative panels at Piṇḍorī (Fig. 13). Yaśodā holding Kṛṣṇa as a baby in her arms finds a portrayal on the walls of the Narmadeśvara temple (Fig. 4)

Fig. 13 *Piṇḍorī Darbār—'The birth of Kṛṣṇa.'*



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where the legend of the Pūtanā *rākshasī* being sucked to death by the child Kṛṣṇa, too finds a place (Plate VII). But the theme which was very popular with the artists of our wall paintings was the life of Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd. Most of the artists came from a society which was predominantly pastoral and agricultural. Moreover, they realised that their beautiful valleys afforded a perfect setting for the life of Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd. There are a number of paintings illustrating Kṛṣṇa taking Nanda's cows in the morning like the other village cowherds, to graze them in the open fields and bring them back at dusk. In Dharamsāl and in Motī Mahal palace, Paṭiālā, we have very beautifully painted illustrations of this theme. Yaśodā's special attachment to Kṛṣṇa is evident in Dharamsāl wall paintings as well as in the Chambā Rangmahal paintings (Plate XXIII), where Yaśodā is shown fondly patting the child Kṛṣṇa.

When Kṛṣṇa grew up to adolescence, he became conscious of the *gopīs*, the shepherdesses and young village maidens of Vṛndāvana. He started teasing them by stealing butter from them, an episode which is depicted at Pinḍorī and Dharamsāl (Fig. 14). Out of this fun and frolic a romantic attachment grew up between the *gopīs* and Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa played the flute beautifully and the *gopīs* fell so much under the spell of his music that they would leave all their domestic chores and their worldly obligations to their husbands and parents and come to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa would satisfy their romantic aspirations by doing *Rāsalīlā* or dancing with all the *gopīs* in moonlight, or playing Holī with them. These episodes are found illustrated in the wall paintings of Chambā and Dharamsāl. The well-known episode of *vastraharaṇa* or the stealing by Kṛṣṇa of the clothes of the *gopīs* as they were bathing in the Yamunā has been picturesquely illustrated at Narmadeśvara, Dharamsāl and Rangmahal palace, Chambā (Plate XXIV).

Rādhā enters the scene later than the *gopīs*. She was the *gopī* to whom Kṛṣṇa showed maximum affection and love. She represents the soul's complete self-surrender for the attainment

Fig. 15 *Pinḍorī Darbār—'Varshāvihāra.'*

Fig. 14 *Dharamsāl Mahañtañ—'Kṛṣṇa stealing butter from Rādhā.'*

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of the divine. Unlike Lakshmī and Sītā, Rādhā was not the wedded wife of an *avatāra*. She represented the eternal woman in love with a man and the poets took her to be the best example of love for God where the human soul has to shed everything, all possessions, worldly obligations and finally physical consciousness and life. Her romance with Kṛṣṇa is painted in all its intensity and delicate nuances in the Pahāḍī wall paintings. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are seen painted at Shogī gazing with love at one another; at Pinḍorī and Chambā Rādhā is playing with Kṛṣṇa in the forest along with other *gopīs*. Scenes of *Varshāvihāra*, amusements in the rainy season, are seen painted in Chambā (Plate XXVI) and in Pinḍorī (Fig. 15). In one instance Kṛṣṇa is shown as sheltering Rādhā from rain under his blanket and gazing fondly at her in that situation. A Rādhā annoyed with her lover seems to have been a favourite theme of the painters; her paintings in this mood are found at Dharamsāl, Dādā Sibā and Chambā Rangmahal. Kṛṣṇa is seen painted as gazing at Rādhā indirectly through a mirror, perhaps assuaging her feelings of annoyance with him, at Chambā Rangmahal (Fig. 16). There is also a painting of the two looking at the far horizon, perhaps in momentary disagreement.

Although, the artists of the wall paintings concentrated on the romantic side of Kṛṣṇa, they did not entirely ignore his exploits of bravery. Their favourite theme in this connection was the well-known episode of the *Govardhanadhāraṇa*. The legend speaks of the wrath of Indra against the residents of Vṛndāvana, who were so engrossed in their love for Kṛṣṇa that they forgot to remember him. He decided to wreak his vengeance on them by causing incessant rain. Vṛndāvana was flooded and the people appealed to Kṛṣṇa for help. Kṛṣṇa did not disappoint them and lifted the mountain of Govardhana on his little finger to serve as an umbrella against rain for the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana. We see men, women, children and, above all, beautiful cows congregating under Mount Govardhana painted on the walls of the Rangmahal palace at Chambā

Fig. 16 *Chambā, Rangmahal—'Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā looking at each other in a mirror.'*

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(Plate XXV), also at Narmadeśvara, Damtāl (Fig. 17), Motī Mahal palace, Paṭiālā, Dādā Sibā and Dharamsāl. Kṛṣṇa came to the aid of his cowherd friends when two of them were swallowed by the great snake king Kāliyā who had his abode in the river. He then chastised the great snake

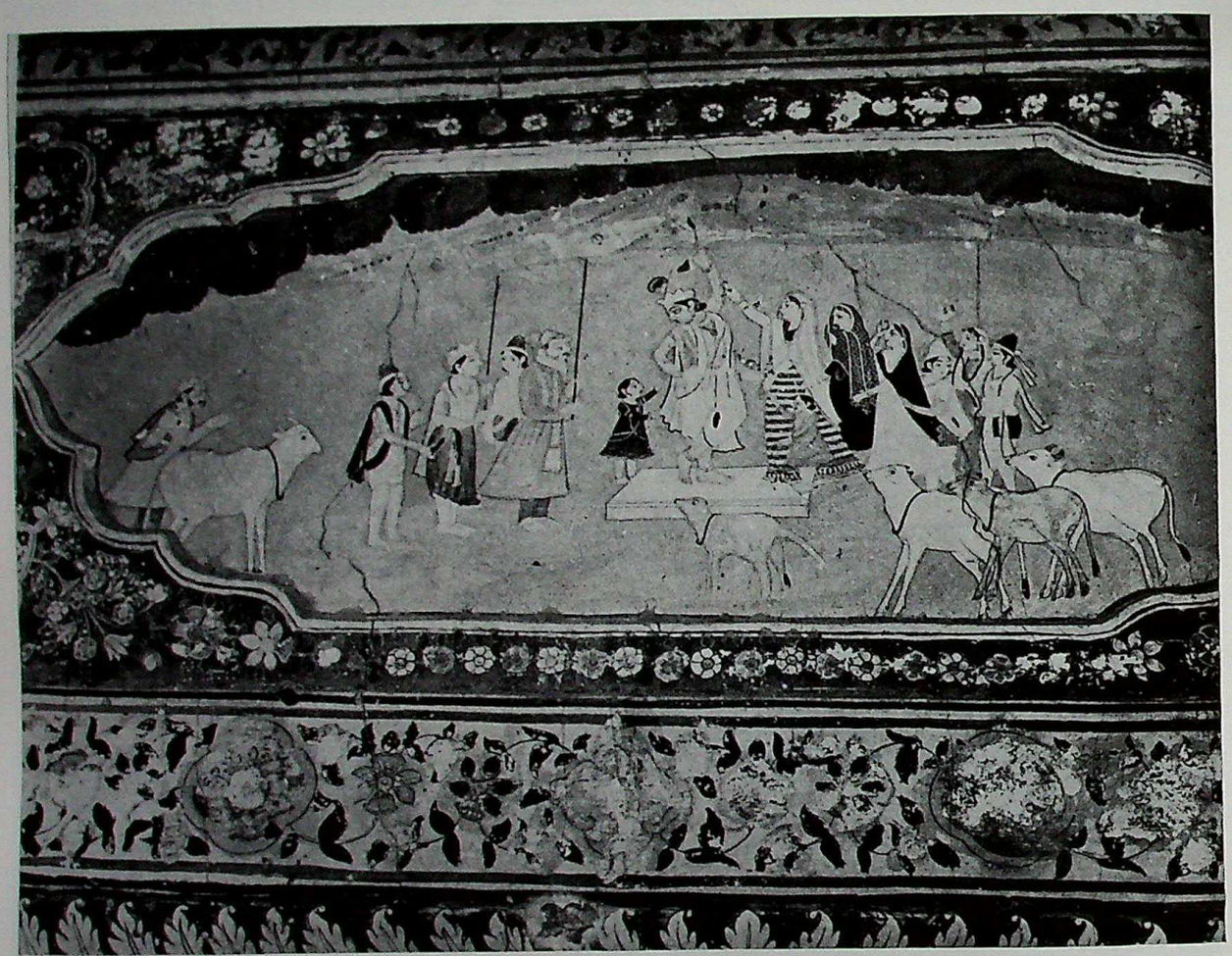

Fig. 17 *Damtāl, ground floor—'Govardhanadhāraṇa.'*

and danced on its hood, an episode which is known as *Kāliyādamana* and has been illustrated at Narmadeśvara and Dādā Sibā.

Kṛṣṇa's victory over Kaṁsa is portrayed with great dramatic effect in the wall paintings of the *Ṭhākurdvāra* of Nūrpur (Fig. 1) and in the Motī Mahal palace at Paṭiālā. The depiction of the life of Kṛṣṇa as a ruler of men and destroyer of evil does not seem to have attracted the hill artists very much. There are, however, a few illustrations of Kṛṣṇa as an associate of Arjuna in the Mahābhārata war at Damtāl (Fig. 18), Piṇḍorī and Shogī. Kṛṣṇa's marriage with Rukminī is found illustrated in a number of paintings in the Narmadeśvara and the Piṇḍorī (Plate XIV) temples.

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Fig. 18 *Damṭāl, ground floor—'Kṛṣṇa setting out for the Mahābhārata.'*

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Rāma's character as a dutiful son and as a *rājā* does not seem to have inspired the artists of the wall paintings of this region, but his marriage and love for Sītā, her abduction and final rescue, these episodes on the other hand seem to have stimulated a great deal of artistic effort. Sītā's *svayaṁvara* (selection of a husband by the bride) is illustrated in all its lyrical charm in Damtāl where Rāma is shown breaking the great bow to the consternation of the other unsuccessful candidates and the delight of Sītā. This legend is also painted in Narmadeśvara. In these paintings are shown scenes of the arrival of Rāma in Janakpurī, the *svayaṁvara* ceremony, the marriage procession of Rāma, the actual wedding and finally Rāma and Sītā's happy installation at Ayodhyā. The fact that the conjugal bliss of Rāma and Sītā did not last long was also taken note of by the artists. The jealousy of Kaikeyī, Rāma's stepmother, drove him to exile with Sītā and his brother Lakshmaṇa. The exile's life in the forest is presented in the paintings of the first floor at Damtāl. There they are shown talking to *sādhūs* or just sitting peacefully in the jungle. The conflict between Rāma and Rāvaṇa is also illustrated in the wall paintings. Sūrpanākhā's visit to the abode of the exiles and the cutting of her nose by Lakshmaṇa is found painted in Damtāl. At Damtāl is also painted the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa. At Narmadeśvara there is a panel

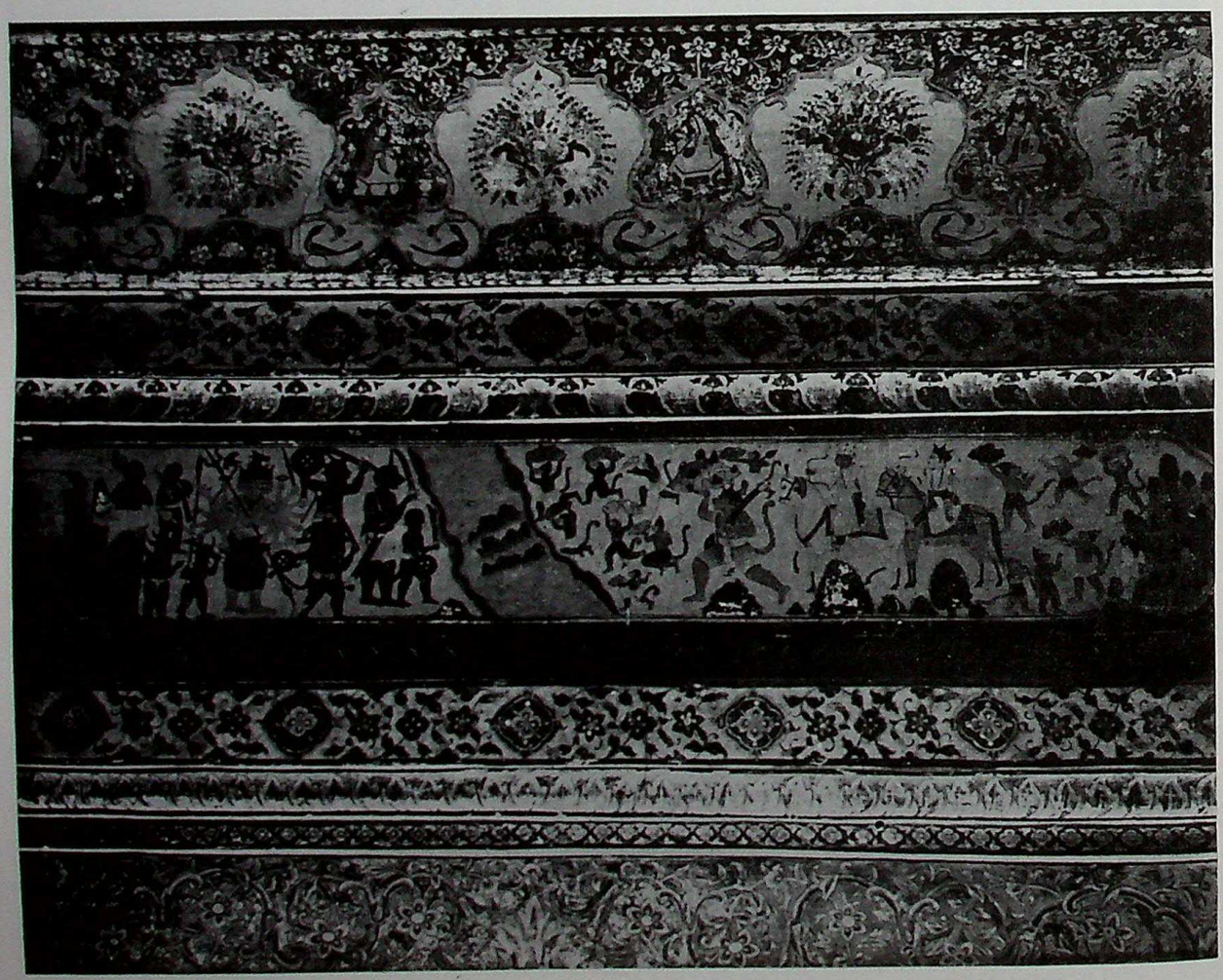

Fig. 19 *Sujānpur Tīrā, Narmadeśvara Temple—'Setubandha.'*

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given to the building of the bridge (*setubandha*) by the army of Rāma (Fig. 19). But judging by the number of painted panels, the most popular Rāma legend in the hills seems to have been the return to Ayodhyā of Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmaṇa and the coronation of Rāma and Sītā. The best panels are at Damtāl and in Rangmahal palace, Chambā (Plate XXVII).

Viṣṇu's other *avatāras* besides Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, though not as popular with the Pahāḍīs, are not altogether rare. Paintings of Viṣṇu reclining on Śeṣanāga with Lakshmī pressing his feet are found at Piṇḍorī Darbār, Damtāl, Narmadeśvara and Shogī. Viṣṇu as *Narasiṁha* is painted in Rangmahal, Chambā, and as *Varāha Avatāra* in Narmadeśvara and Maṇi Mājrā.

Kṛṣṇa and Rāma are both gods who have their homelands in the plains. Śiva is traditionally associated with the hills. Megasthenes,[17] a Greek ambassador to Chandragupta Maurya, observes in his *Indica* that the two gods 'Herakles' and 'Dionysios' were worshipped respectively by the Indians of the plains and the hills. According to Prof. J. N. Banerjee,[18] Megasthenes identified the two Indian deities Kṛṣṇa and Śiva with his Greek gods 'Herakles' and 'Dionysios' respectively. Śiva and Devī worship had very ancient origins in the Western Himālayas. They are believed by the people of these hills to have their home on a peak in Basholī[19]. It is natural that the people of the hills who were more exposed to the adverse elements of nature like thunder and lightning felt deeply the need for divine protection. It can only be expected that they found greater kinship in a god and goddess who have their abodes in the hills than in the gods of far off plains. Moreover Śiva was conceived as an eternal *yogī* and in his detachment was thought to listen more readily to the prayers of his devotees in contrast with the less detached gods of the distant plains. Śiva's popularity is testified to by the different names given to him in this region. In Kulū he is known as Nīlakaṇṭha Mahādeva, as Kamaleśvara in Jwālī, Narmadeśvara in Sujānpur Tīrā and Bilikeśvara and Jameśvara respectively in Nadaun and Mahāsū in the Simlā hills. His popularity is further proved by the fact that almost every village in these areas has a small *Śivālaya* enshrining the *Śiva Liñga*. The royal families paid tribute to Śiva by building some of their grandest temples in his honour. The Narmadeśvara and Gaurīśaṅkara temples at Sujānpur Tīrā, the *Śivālaya* at Nadaun and the Baijnāth temple at Baijnāth are all dedicated to him. The royal families did not only confine their patronage to the construction of the temples and their upkeep but also supported the Śaiva orders of *yogīs*. We know from the history of the *yogīs* of Jakhbar in Gurdāspur district that they were widely respected. A very large number of endowments were made to them and their landed property was at one time spread over a considerable area from Jvālāmukhī near Kāngrā to Parol in Jammū[20].

It seems that the worship of Śiva in his phallic emblem was the commonest practice prevalent in the hills during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries and perhaps this was the practice in earlier centuries as well. All the Śiva temples in which the wall paintings of this region are found are dedicated to the *Śiva Liñga*. It was incidentally the oldest form of Śiva worship. The worship of the Rudra Śiva, the husband of Satī, was also prevalent because the Jvālāmukhī shrine is said to have been dedicated to one of the limbs of Satī which is supposed to have fallen there.

The favourite themes for the illustration of the Śiva legend in the hills are not the penances of Śiva, the great *yogī*, or his aspect as the great destroyer and preserver of the race, but the domestic felicity which this wild god achieved living in the beautiful mountains with his consort Pārvatī. In Narmadeśvara (Plate IV) Śiva and Pārvatī are shown seated on Mount Kailāśa watching the dance

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of beautiful *apsarās* (heavenly fairies). The *apsarās* are also painted in a Chambā Rangmahal panel.

Śiva's romance with Pārvatī was brought about through the intercession of *devatās* and it represents the triumph of good over evil. According to the legend, Śiva had retired to deep meditation and penance after the death of his wife Satī, who had burnt herself in the sacrificial fire at the *yajña* performed by her father Dakṣha. In this mood he was impervious to the prayers of Pārvatī, the daughter of the Himālayas who was doing penance to have only Śiva as her husband. Meanwhile, evil forces had reared their ugly head in the world as Śiva, the protector of the world, was in meditation. The *devatās* felt that only a son born to Śiva would be able to destroy the forces of evil. In this predicament the *devatās* headed by Indra succeeded in the strategy of disturbing the meditation of Śiva through the allurement of songs and dances of the *apsarās* and ultimately Śiva and Pārvatī were united in marriage. These episodes found portrayal in many Pahāḍī paintings. The scene of Śiva's marriage with Pārvatī seems to have been a favourite theme with the Pahāḍī artists. At Dādā Sibā there is a panel depicting the dance of the *apsarās* before Śiva at the time of his marriage. The marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī itself is painted in a series of panels at Narmadeśvara and Maṇī Mājrā temples.

The worship of Devī as manifestation of *Śaktī* appears to have been prevalent in the hills from Vedic times. The association of the goddess with hills and mountains, especially in her Umā form, is very old and she is described as the daughter of the Himālayan mountain (Umā Haimavatī) in the *Keṇa Upaniṣad* (III, 25)[21]. During the period of Pahāḍī wall paintings, Devī is worshipped not only as the *Śaktī* of Śiva but also in her own right as the Brahmavidyā of the Vedic times and the Mahiṣamardinī of the *Purāṇas*. She is also adored as the Kanyā Kumarī or the virgin goddess, which is rather strange because this aspect of the Devī is predominantly associated with the extreme south of India and Eastern India. Of the terrific forms of Devī which were known in the Western Himālayas, the most important are those of Kālī, Bhadrakālī, Śri and Bhavāni mentioned in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*. She is also referred to as Chāmuṇḍa, which is also a form of Kālī. Devotion is also displayed to her here as Tripurāsundrī or the most beautiful woman in the three worlds. Many other forms of the mother goddess are also known, mainly as a healer of diseases, namely Śītalā, Masani, Bāsantī, Mahāmāī, Polamada, Lamkawa and Agwānī—these seven being known as sisters. There are numerous temples dedicated to her, the most famous of which are the Lakshmaṇa Devī, Śaktī Devī and Chāmuṇḍā Devī temples, all in the district of Chambā and at Maṇī Mājrā in Chanḍīgarh. It is interesting to note that she appears along with her husband Śiva in the Gauriśaṅkara temple only in Sujānpur Tīrā; elsewhere she appears only but in her married status. At Lagpata in Himāchal Pradesh, there is a temple in honour of Kanyā Devī or the virgin goddess.

It seems that the favourite subject of Devī illustration of the artists of the wall paintings of the Western Himālayas was the four *Devī Stutis*—namely, *Brahma Stuti*, *Sakaradi Stuti*, *Viṣṇumāyā Stuti* and *Nārāyaṇī Stuti* of the *Devī Mahātamayā Khañḍa* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. According to this legend, Mahiṣāsura, a powerful *rākshasa*, had defeated the gods and ruled heaven in their place. The gods appealed to the holy Trinity of Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Brahma and out of their anger and energy and those of the other gods, Mahiṣamardinī Devī appeared and destroyed Mahiṣāsura *rākshasa*. She is seen performing this destruction in the Rangmahal palace, Chambā, Narmadeśvara temple (Plate VI), Shogī temple (Fig. 7) and also in the Maṇī Mājrā temple. The gods had

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another occasion to appeal to their protectress Viṣṇumayā when the two Asura brothers, Śumbha and Niśumbha troubled them. Devī is seen punishing them in Narmadeśvara temple.

Although the people in general in the Western Himālayas were dovoted to Śiva and Devī, yet in their day-to-day worship they paid their most intimate homage to nature and a whole horde of *devīs* and *devatās* which do not form part of the *smārta-paurāṇik* forms of Hinduism. As in all mountain regions, in the Western Himālayas, the grandeur of their natural features and the magnitude of the physical forces displayed led the inhabitants to deify the natural objects by which they were surrounded. They also tried to assign to each of these natural phenomena its presiding genius and to attribute to them a more or less malevolent character[22]. Every day religious rites and observations were confined to the *chas* or genii of the trees, rocks and caves and local spirits or demons known as *devatās* or godlings. There were also *devīs* who were apparently corresponding female divinities, *ṛṣis*, *munis* or local saints, *siddhas* of the hill-tops or high places, and *yoginīs*, who are, according to Prof. J. N. Banerjee, objects of worship in the *Tāntric Śākta* ritualism[23].

The worship of the snake—*nāga* and *nāginī*—was prevalent in various forms in the Western Himālayas to a much greater extent than in the plains and was perhaps the oldest form of worship in the hills. The snakes were thought by some to have power over milch cattle and also over fevers, others thought of them as water spirits typifying the alternately beneficial and destructive powers of water. However, it is safer to regard them as emblems of fertility and reproduction[24].

About two-thirds of the women and some of the men in Kāngrā district were believers of Narasiṁha, locally called Narsingh. It was believed that he gave sons and assisted in all difficulties[25]. Gugā Pīr (local deity), stones and trees were also worshipped in small way-side shrines. It is surprising that even the burial grounds of Mohammedan saints were worshipped by the Hindus. Gaṇeśa, Hanumāna and Bhairon were also gods who had worshippers in this area. Sometimes different occupational groups had their own special deities, for example, the *chamārs* (cobblers) worshipped Gugā Pīr, while the *lohārs* (blacksmiths) and *tarkhāns* (carpenters) worshipped Viśvakarmā.

A favourite location for a shrine of these popular spirits, gods and goddesses was a forest, a mountain peak, a lake, a cave or a waterfall. Many of these non-anthropomorphic, aniconic gods and goddesses were local, each locality or group of villages having its own deities or *grāma devatās*, the boundaries between their jurisdiction being clearly defined. Further, almost every village had its own temple and the local men themselves, and not Brahmins, officiated as priests. These shrines had their own standards or flags, their own vehicles, feasts and festivals[26].

The wall paintings of the Western Himālayas do not give any indication of the plebian religion of the people of the hills. There are no representations of the village *devatās* or *devīs* nor evidence of nature worship or the other minor gods and goddesses, except 'Ee' in Maṇi Mājrā (Fig. 20).

A remarkable feature of the religion of the Western Himālayas during the period of wall paintings was the general eclecticism of the times. It seems that there was no antagonism and tension between the followers of the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva cults. Unlike in the South and in certain parts of the North, these two cults did not have exclusive followers but existed side by side. To many of the hill men paying obeisance to Kṛṣṇa did not exclude homage to Śiva or the Devī and, of course, the lesser gods and goddesses.

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Fig. 20 *Maṇī Mājrā, Mansā Devī Temple—'Ee.'*

In general, almost every household had its own special deity. However, its members also went regularly to the temple nearest to their homes; visits were often paid to all the temples in the village and occasionally to the temples in nearby towns and villages. Once in a life-time visits to *tīrthas* outside the hills, irrespective of the deities to whom they were dedicated, were also made by most of the hill people. This eclecticism is also shown by the fact that even in temples like the Narmadeśvara, the Gauriśaṅkara and the *Śivālaya* at Nadaun, which are all dedicated to Śiva and in the Maṇī Mājrā temple which is dedicated to Devī, most of the paintings illustrate Vaiṣṇava themes. Similarly, in the Vaiṣṇava temples of Shogī, Nūrpur and Piṇḍorī, illustrations of Śiva legends are not at all infrequent.

The art of the wall paintings of the Western Himālayas seems to have generally followed the traditional thematic pattern as laid down in the *Śilpaśāstra* texts. They obeyed the basic classification about what should be painted and what was a taboo in residential houses, palaces and temples[27]. Only those themes with pleasant *rasas* or evocative of happy feelings were to be painted

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in houses and palaces, while in temples all *rasas* could be depicted. Themes which could excite fright were not supposed to be painted.

Thematically speaking, the legend of Kṛṣṇa was the most popular theme in the wall paintings of the Western Himālayas just as it was in the miniatures. Looking at the representations of this theme it is perceived at once that the artists followed the well-known iconographic and thematic pattern as prescribed for them in medieval poetry and literature. Kṛṣṇa's complexion is always dark; he invariably wears a yellow *dhotī* and has a peacock feather in his hair. Interesting iconographic variations are, however, provided by Kṛṣṇa's face. Some of the feudal royal patrons were vain enough to get their own face painted as that of Kṛṣṇa himself. Sansār Chand was specially fond of doing so, and his face can be traced on many portraits of Kṛṣṇa in the Kāngrā miniatures produced in his court. When depicting the scene of the *Govardhanadhāraṇa* by Kṛṣṇa, for instance, a set iconographic pattern was always adopted. In all such illustrations Kṛṣṇa is generally seen in profile, usually standing crosslegged; he always lifts the mountain on the little finger of his right hand. Even the position of cows and human beings in relation to the central character is generaly the same; all figures are shown converging near him and looking at him. A comparison of this theme painted in Damtāl (Fig. 17) with the Chambā Rangmahal (Plate XXV) illustration makes this clear.

Some amount of imagination seems, however, to have gone into painting the figures of Rādhā, the *gopīs* and subsidiary characters like maid servants, the parents of Kṛṣṇa and the others present. Rādhā is painted in a variety of fashions wearing different types of clothes. This can be compared by looking at Rādhā in the Chambā Rangmahal paintings (Fig. 8) and in Pinḍorī (Fig. 15). The *gopīs* are also dressed in different styles as seen in the Devī-rī-Koṭhī murals and in Rangmahal, Chambā (Plate XXVII), two centres of wall paintings in close physical proximity. Similarly, some themes associated with Kṛṣṇa's sport (*līlā*) with the *gopīs* are repeated in the different centres but they display some amount of iconographic variety. For example, there are a number of *vastraharaṇa* scenes painted all over the Western Himālayas, in the Narmadeśvara temple (Plate IX), Rangmahal, Chambā (Plate XXIV), Mañḍī (Fig. 21), Dharamsāl and at Nadaun, for instance, but their compositions are different. In Narmadeśvara temple Kṛṣṇa is not illustrated sitting on a tree but is shown hidden behind it, while two peacocks, representing him symbolically, are seen on the branches of the tree. In all the other centres Kṛṣṇa is depicted seated on the branch of a tree. In Narmadeśvara an old lady is trying to cover up the *gopīs* with a shawl in order to hide their embarrassment at being found naked in the presence of Kṛṣṇa. This is again not found in any other illustration of the theme. It is also interesting to note that in some of the *vastraharaṇa* scenes the *gopīs* are seen on the river bank as in Chambā Rangmahal (Plate XXIV), while in Mañḍī (Fig. 21) some are shown still swimming whereas others are standing on the river bank.

In the illustrations of the Rāma legend too, as far as Rāma himself is concerned, a set iconographic pattern is used. He is always painted with a dark complexion and with either a top knot on his head as seen at Damtāl and Narmadeśvara or with a crown on his head as in the *darbār* scene of Damtāl. No rigid iconographic rules were, however, applied in painting the attendants of Rāma. A few curious representations are also known; in certain scenes at Damtāl and Dharamsāl, Rāma's attendants are dressed and coiffeured in the Sikh fashion.

Viṣṇu is generally painted in the Western Himālayas as lying recumbent on the Anantanāga, the mythological snake, with Lakshmi pressing his feet. All the iconographic emblems prescribed

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Fig. 21 *Mañḍī, Miān Bhāg Singh's Haveli Mandir—'Vastraharaṇa.'*

for such scenes[28], like the open hood of the snake forming a canopy over the head of Viṣṇu and the figures in attendance, are scrupulously followed by the Pahāḍī artists.

In the drawings of Śiva very little ingenuity is shown by the Pahāḍī artists. They followed the conventional iconographic pattern as laid down in the *Pratimālakshaṇa* texts. He is invariably drawn in a very flat line and the body completely lacks muscles. J. N. Banerjee[29] has pointed out that the Indian habit of not emphasising the muscles on the body is according to the ancient iconographic patterns. Śiva is moreover always painted in a frontal position wearing the same type of clothes, a tiger skin and snakes as seen in the Chambā Rangmahal (Plate XXIX) and Narmadeśvara. A very unusual iconographic variation can be noticed in the Maṇī Mājrā temple. Here, in one of the scenes Śiva is shown riding a dog.

Devī as Pārvatī emerges as a graceful lady wearing different kinds of clothes in different situations. The Pārvatī of Shogī (Fig.7) is very different from the Pārvatī painted in the Rangmahal, Chambā, paintings (Plate XXIX). In most of the scenes the Devī appears without her consort

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Śiva. In her form as Mahiṣamardinī, a well-known and conventional iconographic pattern has been adopted; the text describes her as a young woman with a complexion of gold in an angry mood sitting on the back of a lion, with twenty hands, the right ones carrying respectively the *sula*, *khaḍga*, *śaṅkha*, *chakra*, *bana*, *Śaktī*, *vajra*, *abhaya*, *ḍamaru* and an umbrella; while the left ones hold *nāga-pāśa*, *khetaka*, *parasu*, *ankusa dhanus*, *ghanṭa*, *dhwaja*, *gadā*, mirror and the *mudgara*. It is also laid down that the buffalo part of the *asura* would be shown lying decapacitated with the real *asura* coming out of the neck with a sword and a shield. His eyes, hair and brows would be red and he would be shown vomitting blood. The lion of the Devī would be seen mauling him and the Devī herself would be illustrated thrusting her *triśula*, a painted iron rod, into his neck[30]. All these canons are faithfully observed in Mahiṣamardinī illustration found at Shogī (Fig. 7).

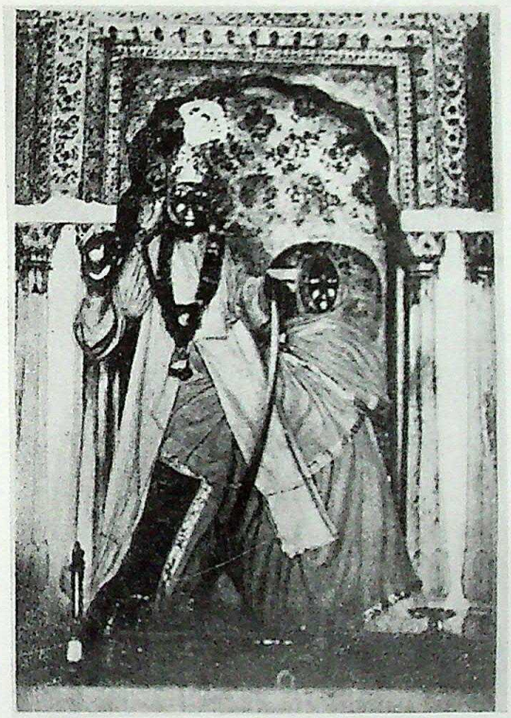

Fig. 22 *Sujānpur Tīrā, Gaurīśaṅkara Temple—'Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.'*

A very interesting iconographic departure is noticed in the cast metal image of Śiva and Pārvatī at the Gaurīśaṅkara temple of Sujānpur Tīrā. The figures of the couple are modelled on an ordinary hill couple (Fig. 22). They are dressed in the costumes of a hill *rājā* and his *rāṇī*, Śiva wearing a turban and Pārvatī a skirt, blouse and *oḍhaṇī*, usually worn by hill women.

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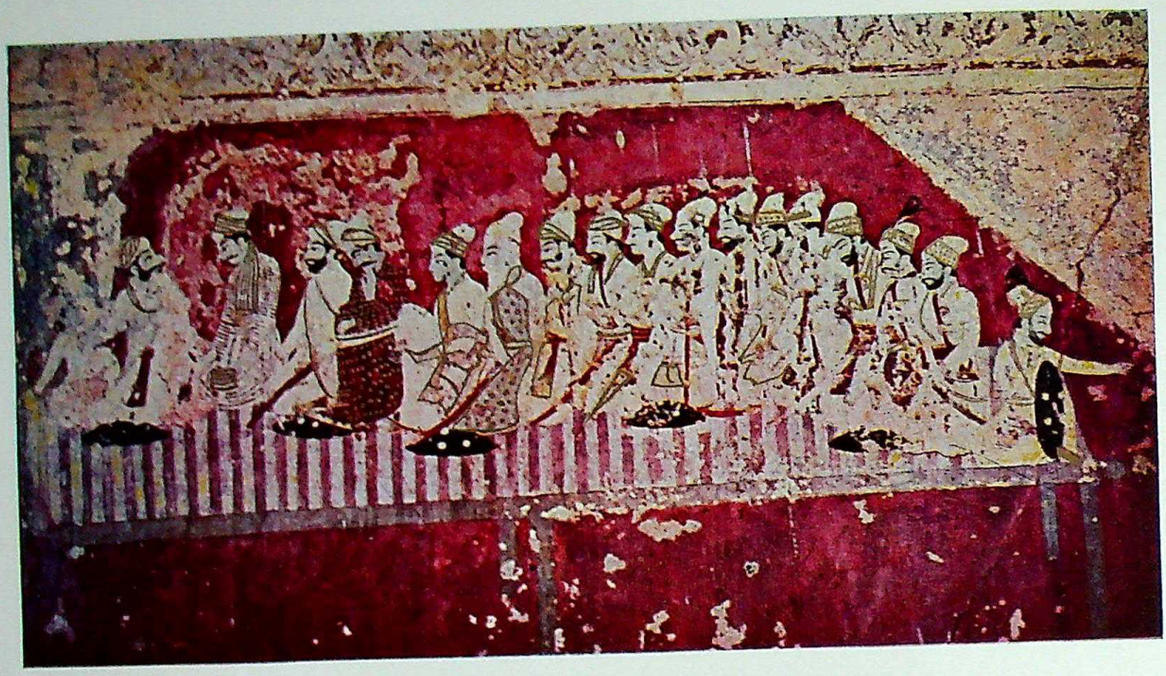

Plate II

Ṭhākurdvārā, Nūrpur
'Kaṁsa's *darbār*.'

Plate IIa

Ṭhākurdvārā, Nūrpur
'Kaṁsa's *darbār*—another view.'

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4

CENTRES OF WALL PAINTING

THE ART OF wall paintings seems to have been as widespread as that of the miniatures in the Western Himālayas. Remains of wall paintings can still be found at varying stages of decay and disintegration in the district of Gurdāspur at Damtāl, Piṇḍorī, Kalānaur and Ḍerā Bābā Nānak; in the Kāngrā district at Nūrpur, Nadaun, Sujānpur Tirā, Dharamsāl and Dādā Sibā; in the Kulū district at Sultānpur; in the Chambā district at Chambā; in the Simlā district at Shogī; in the Mahāsū district at Arkī; and in the Mañḍī district in the Mañḍī town itself. It is not unlikely that such remains may come to light elsewhere as well. But the paintings of the centres that are referred to above and which are described in this chapter may be said to represent the condition of wall paintings in general in the Western Himālayas during the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

KĀNGRĀ DISTRICT

Nūrpur

Nūrpur fort contains a *Ṭhākurdvārā*, also known as Kṛṣṇa's shrine, the walls of which are covered with paintings. According to local tradition they are said to have been painted on the orders of Rājā Jagat Singh (A.D. 1619-1646). Kārl Khandelwālā[1], however, thinks that they were painted on the orders of Rājā Māndhātā (A.D. 1661-1770) and that in one of the panels there was a portrait of Rājā Māndhātā himself which has been whitewashed. On stylistic grounds, however, the paintings appear to belong to the last quarter of the eighteenth century and they were, therefore, probably executed during the reign of Rājā Bīr Singh (A.D. 1789-1846).

The temple at Nūrpur is a double-storeyed structure. On the ground floor there is a verandah, which is completely covered with paintings, but most of these have been rubbed out or repeatedly whitewashed. The artist of these paintings is said to have been a *tarkhān* called Golū who seems to have been a very versatile man, architect, mason and carpenter besides being a

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painter. The drawing has considerable power and strength. Although most of the pigments used in these paintings have faded, what does remain shows that they must have once been fine examples of the art, since even now they reveal a pleasing delicacy of line and colour. There is an abundance of blackish maroon, locally known as *naswāri*, and pastel shades of light blue, yellow, orange, pink and white. It is quite evident from an examination of the methods of colouring adopted by the artists that they had a very fine sense of colour and a delicate touch in applying it.

On the left side of the verandah are painted three rows of panels, one on top of the other. The main theme seems to be Kṛṣṇa's final victory over Kaṁsa, his maternal uncle (Fig. 1). This incident of Kṛṣṇa Līlā is painted in different consecutive panels. These panels seem to indicate that there was an earlier tradition of wall painting in this region. This is seen by the fact that figures of Kaṁsa and Kṛṣṇa are drawn in fairly big sizes in a few scenes in broad sweeps in the tradition of classical mural painting of India. They also demonstrate an awareness of the narrative form of painting which again was derived from the classical tradition. The illustration of the Kaṁsa theme does not exhibit an undue concern with the time sequence. Kṛṣṇa, for example, is shown as a full grown man dragging Pūtanā by her hair, whereas according to legend, he was a mere infant when this happened. There is a breadth in the composition which, combined with the narrative manner of illustration, makes it a remarkable Pahāḍī mural. Kaṁsa's palace is painted on the left hand side of the painting. On the right hand side, his *darbār*, with an elaborate system of seating arrangements for the courtiers, poets and musicians, all according to their rank, is painted in a formal fashion. In the lower portion of the panel, Kṛṣṇa is painted wrestling first with the court wrestler and then with Kaṁsa himself whom he kills. A pictorial element is introduced in the painting by the presentation of a group of five ladies watching the entrance of Kṛṣṇa into the palace. They are all beautifully dressed in garments of light blue, red and maroon (Plate I). In the centre of the first panel there is a door and on its two shutters are painted two exquisitely fashionable ladies in coquettish poses (Fig. 10).

There is a horizontal painting running above the panels illustrating the victory of Kṛṣṇa over Kaṁsa. This panel is subdivided into many cameos depicting the individual's reaction to the fight. Moving from left to right are seen lovely queens in red dresses gazing down from their palace balconies and poor women dressed shabbily sitting in their huts, staring questioningly at fate which seems to have separated them from their lovers. The adjacent scenes contain illustrations of armies marching with richly caparisoned elephants and horses of the nobles, and ordinary soldiers on foot. Even in war the romantic artist felt that husbands or lovers do not forget their beloveds at home. In a small panel a lonely *rājā* is painted with a sad look in his eyes, while in the next scene the *rāṇī* is illustrated receiving a letter from the *rājā*. A few panels of lovely heroines are followed by small panels illustrating *rākshasas* and *sādhūs* as an obvious attempt to indicate the struggle between good and evil. Finally, the lovers are shown together in their balconies and victory is celebrated in a small *darbār* scene. From the stylistic point of view, the drawing of these panels is very refined. The painting is done mostly in maroon, pink, yellow, green, chocolate, white and, above all, in various shades of blue. The colours have a clear translucent quality which is rarely seen in Pahāḍī paintings. In these panels very delicate pastel shades of light blue, yellow and pink were employed to illustrate the poignancy of the men going out to war and women remaining behind to wait for their return.

Above the second panel, there are three illustrations showing respectively the coronation of Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu killing the boar and Kṛṣṇa sitting with the *gopīs*.

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Plate III

Ṭhākurdvāra, Nūrpur

'A *ṛṣī* with his disciples and devotees before a temple.'

Plate IIIa

Ṭhākurdvārā, Nūrpur

A detail from Plate III

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On the panel above the one illustrating the celebration of Kṛṣṇa's victory over Kaṁsa, is again a horizontal panel with small illustrations of a fully armed *rājā* standing in a chariot, below him are his courtiers in *darbār* (Plate II), a *rājā* in a forest, the god Agni, Ṛṣi Vāsudeva teaching his disciples in a forest hermitage and the *Varāha Avatāra* (Plate III). Most of these illustrations are painted in lemon yellow, light blue, orange and maroon (Plate III).

Behind the right wall on which the seventh panel has been painted is an arch leading into a small area enclosed within a dome-like structure. On the walls of this enclosure are a few paintings, consisting of compositions depicting pink hills in the Persian idiom, *sādhūs* around a sacrificial vessel, a temple of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa in his *Govardhanadhāraṇa* pose in which the mountain, held on his little finger, shows images of the Devī.

The cleaning of some of the walls of the temple has revealed a few more paintings but the colouring as well as style of these paintings are cruder as compared to the paintings already described. They appear to be later in origin but are, unfortunately, not very clear and only the figures of Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and two princesses can just be made out.

Nadaun

Mandir Śivālaya, otherwise known as the Pattanwālā Mandir, because it was situated on the *pattan* or dockyard where the country boats of the Beās river were anchored, had its walls covered over with paintings. According to local tradition, this temple, dedicated to Śiva, was built by Rājā Sansār Chand of Kāngrā (A.D. 1776-1823). The style of the paintings indicates that they are quite early creations of the Kāngrā style patronised by Sansār Chand.

Most of the paintings found in this temple have become indistinct with age; there is, however, one very powerful painting which is still somewhat clear. It depicts two *rājās* (Fig. 2) mounted on elephants emerging from the two corners of an arch, accompanied by their cavalry and foot soldiers, all fully armed to do battle. The drawing is very expressive as it succeeds in depicting a very tense atmosphere, by employing the modelled line in drawing the faces of the warriors and using similar lines to draw elephants and horses. Unfortunately, most of the colours have faded and only the black of the elephants, the brown of the horses and the pink of the human figures are still clear. Its drawing as well as painting shows that this panel was executed in the best tradition of the early Kāngrā style.

On the outer wall of the temple, there is a solitary figure of a Bhairon (Bhairava) painted in black and yellow holding a banner in his hand. Among the not so distinct panels are scenes of two *rājās* playing *chaupār* or drafts; Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā milking their cows; Kṛṣṇa holding the arm of an apparently annoyed Rādhā and also holding a *darbār* and listening to music; Śiva and Pārvatī seated in a forest; Hanumāna; Devī on a tiger and elephants paying homage to an invisible deity with flowers. Floral designs have been painted on the ceiling and the walls, but most of them are again indistinct.

Sujānpur Tīrā

Sujānpur Tīrā which was the capital of Sansār Chand, happens to be the locale of three important temples; the Gaurīśaṅkara, the Murali Manohara and the Narmadeśvara. Except for the Murali Manohara, the other two temples bear clear traces of paintings on the walls.

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Narmadeśvara Temple

This temple was built by Rāṇī Prasanī Devī, wife of Rājā Sansār Chand of Kāngrā (A.D. 1776-1823), in Vikrama Saṁvat 1860 corresponding to A.D. 1802. It is located in a beautiful setting on the banks of the river Beās. The architecture of the temple is in line with Rājasthānī architecture and has traces of the influence of the later Mughals (Fig. 23).

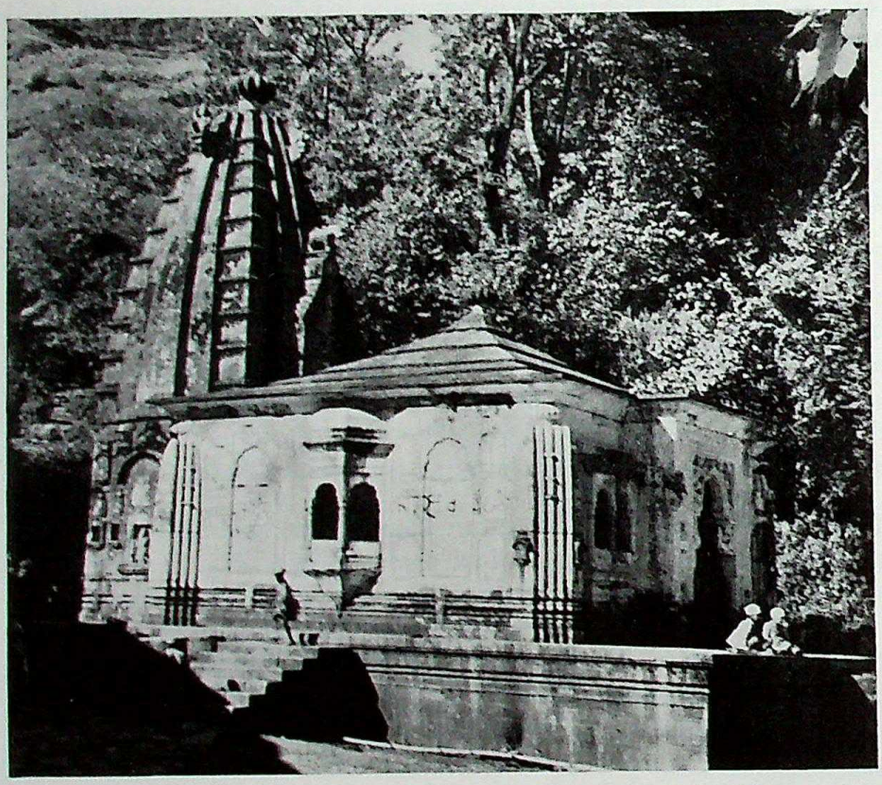

Fig. 23 *Sujānpur Tīrā, Narmadeśvara Temple.*

Fig. 24 *Sujānpur Tīrā, Kāngrā Miniature— 'Siva and his devotees.'*

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Plate IV

Narmadeśvara Temple

'Śiva and Pārvatī in their abode on Mount Kailaśa.'

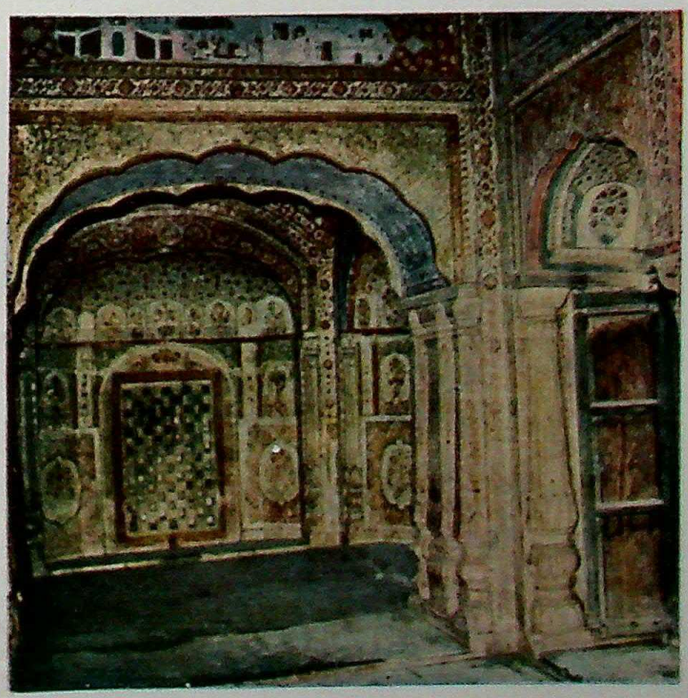

Plate IVa

Narmadeśvara Temple

'Pradakhshina-path—temple corridors.'

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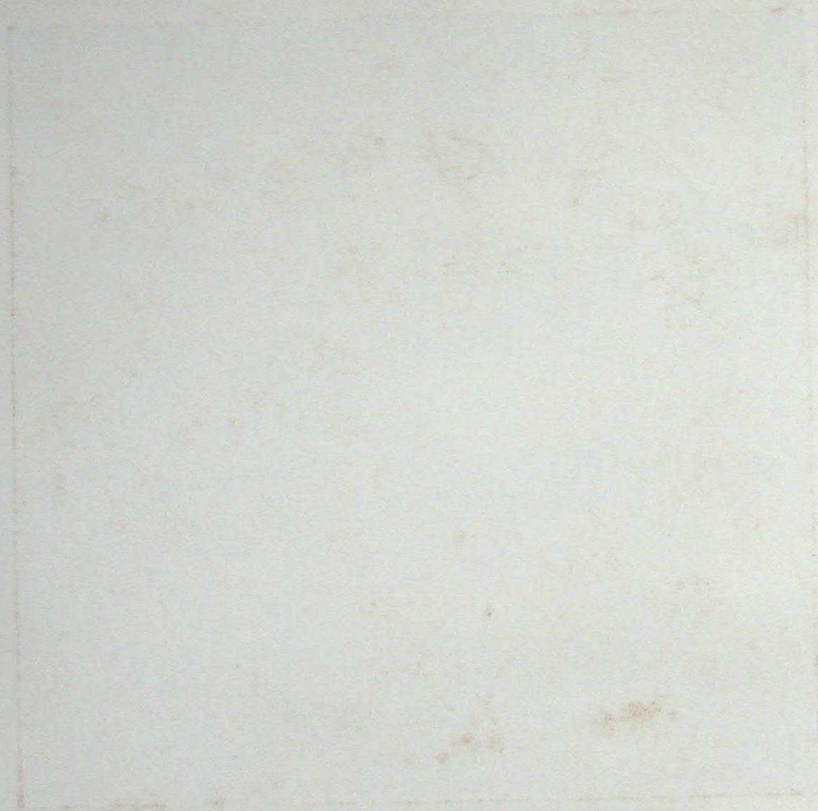

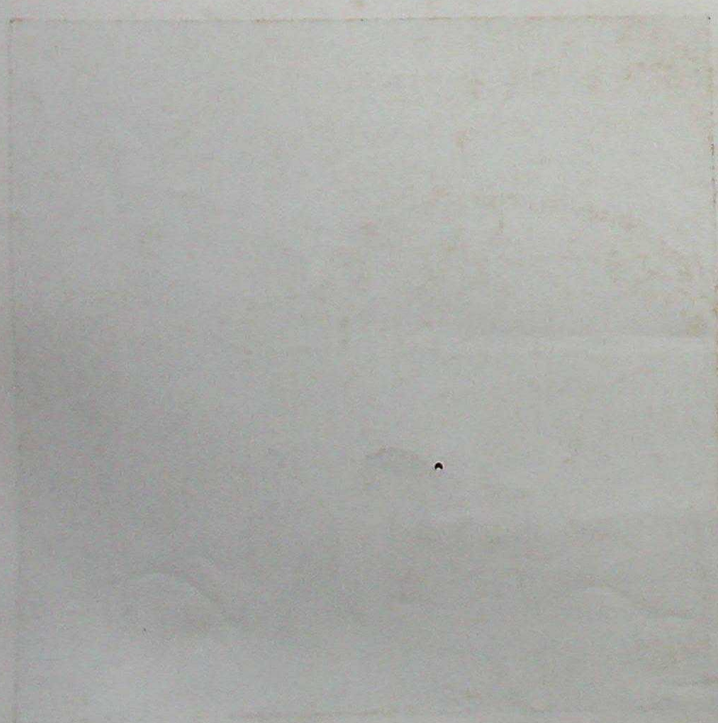

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The temple is full of paintings which local tradition attributes to various artists. According to Pañḍit Dīwan Chand, the venerable old priest of the temple, the painters came from Delhi at the request of the Rāṇī. According to another tradition[2], these paintings were executed by a family of local artists belonging to the caste of Bujherū Brahmins whose descendants are still living in Sujānpur Tirā. A few miniatures found in the possession of this family (Fig. 24) have the same fineness of drawing and sense of colouring which is found in the Narmadeśvara wall paintings. The name of one of the artists, Dakkir, is written on the paintings. What is most distinctive about the paintings found here is the fact that although they all belong to the Kāngrā style, there are distinct variations within the main style. These differences of form cannot be attributed to difference in themes or the stories depicted. It is often found that the paintings of essentially the same subject and placed in the same row of the same wall show differences in style. These variations can perhaps be explained by the employment of a number of artists, each one following his own style.

The temple is dedicated to Śiva who is here depicted in his gentler moods. On the right side of the outer wall of the inner sanctum, there are a series of scenes showing Śiva's wedding with Pārvatī in the latter's home in the Himālayas. Most of them have become blackened with age and the use of incense in the temple, but those that are still slightly clear depict the arrival of Śiva with his marriage procession consisting of *devatās*; a graceful Pārvatī being brought forward for the ceremony; the actual wedding ceremony of the divine couple; the bride and the bridegroom receiving congratulations from their guests and finally their return to Mount Kailāśa on the back of Nandī. The artist has laid emphasis on the use of gold and maroon in these panels, perhaps to heighten the effect of drama and grandeur. In a somewhat different style of painting are two attractive panels in the temple illustrating Śiva's life in the forest with Pārvatī. In one of the panels Śiva is relaxing with Pārvatī in his home in Mount Kailāśa. In the adjoining panel, Rāvaṇa, in his annoyance at being ignored by Śiva, is trying to shake Mount Kailāśa while Pārvatī is clinging in fright to an unperturbed Śiva (Plate V). Śiva is seen wearing a garland of skulls, with his arm protectively around Pārvatī and with one leg controlling the movement of the mountain. The trees have been shown in movement, much in contrast with the hills which are drawn rather conventionally. In a fourth panel on the Śiva Pārvatī theme, they are depicted sitting in sylvan surroundings. It is painted in subdued dark green, maroon, brown, rust and white. One of the arches of the temple contains an illustration of Śiva and Pārvatī seated together on a cushion of flowers. Finally, we have an illustration of Śiva dressed as a *yogī* roaming the forests alone after the death of Pārvatī (Plate V).

The artists of Narmadeśvara seem to have portrayed the gentler aspects of Śiva reserving as it were the power and vigour of the god for his *Śaktī* (Plate VI). The Devī's confrontation with the Mahiṣāsura, Śumbha and Niśumbha are painted in two sets of distinct panels. In both series the Devī is illustrated fully armed and doing battle with *rākshasas* while her devotees are praying for her final victory.

A thematic preference for those themes in the Rāma legend in which Rāma figures with Sītā is noticeable. Three different episodes of his life, painted in different styles, are illustrated in this temple. Near the inner sanctum is a series of panels painted in red, gold and black, on the theme of Rāma's marriage to Sītā. In the first panel he is seen in a palace attended by two women, indicating his arrival in Sītā's home town. In the second panel Rāma is shown bending the unbreakable *haradhanu* (the bow of Śiva) while Sītā is garlanding him as her chosen lord and Janaka and Viśvāmitra are embracing each other in happiness. The third panel illustrates the

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arrival of the marriage procession of Rāma and his brothers in Janakapurī, accompanied by men on horses and elephants and on foot, singing and dancing. In the last panel of this series is shown the palace of Daśaratha in Ayodhyā in all its grandeur. In one of the rooms are shown Rāma and Lakshmaṇa, evidently in conversation with their wives; in another room Kauśalya is portrayed alone, and finally in the third room, Rāma and Lakshmaṇa are seen talking to their *Rājagurū*. A general air of jubilance marks the entire series.

This temple also contains two other separate panels on Rāma's life. On one of the walls is a very small painting illustrating Rāma's happy life with Sītā in Pañchavaṭī in the company of *sādhūs*. Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmaṇa are illustrated talking to the *sādhūs* in this panel. A very sophisticated panel portrays the army of Rāma and Lakshmaṇa led by Hanumāna and his monkey hordes who are throwing big stones in water, indicating their attempt to build a bridge to Lañkā, while on the other shore the *rākshasa* army of Rāvaṇa is confronting them. Sītā is seen in a palanquin in the right hand corner of the painting (Fig. 19). The grouping of figures, their movements and expressions are all very vividly painted. The colour scheme consists of gentle pastel colours like blue and pink relieved by olive green trees and the red dress of Sītā. A small panel illustrates Rāma and Sītā holding a *darbār* in Ayodhyā after their return from exile.

The artists of Narmadeśvara were very fond of the Kṛṣṇa legend; they have painted the episodes from his life with a great deal of zest and with display of colour. Three of the best panels of the Kṛṣṇa legend found here are given to the episodes of his infancy. In the first panel (Fig. 4) Yaśodā is sitting holding the newly born Kṛṣṇa in her arms while her friends and servants are fluttering around her in great excitement, bringing medicines for her and clothes for the child. There is a great deal of grace and feeling in the drawing of the female figures. In the second panel Nanda is holding Balarāma's hand and looking with great astonishment along with a few *gopīs* at Kṛṣṇa sucking the life of Pūtanā (Plate VII). The most striking feature of this painting is a big tree treated very naturalistically. In the third panel Kṛṣṇa is depicted sucking his toe while Balarāma is clinging to Nanda (Plate VIII). The colours of all these panels, except for the maroon and the black, have faded but their drawing is very elegant, graceful and full of a feeling for movement.

There are two other small panels which also illustrate Kṛṣṇa's childhood but they are very different from the paintings seen in the above three panels.

The artists seem to have taken some interest in painting near the ceiling of the temple, a string of charming cameos illustrating Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in a forest looking at each other or holding hands, Kṛṣṇa playing his flute for his friends and finally a very unusual depiction of the *vastraharaṇa* theme. Here, Kṛṣṇa is not alone with the *gopīs* who are seen submerged in water along with their cows while an elderly lady is frantically trying to protect their modesty. Kṛṣṇa is not portrayed as sitting on a tree; his place there seems to have been taken by two peacocks. Kṛṣṇa sits behind the *kadamba* tree and is talking to Rādhā and a few *gopīs*. Most of the colours of the painting have faded and only green and black are still evident, but the drawing is quite powerful (Plate IX).

At Narmadeśvara there are two panels depicting the famous legend of *Govardhanadhāraṇa*. In one painting Kṛṣṇa has lifted on a finger the Mount Govardhana which looks like a big umbrella under which animals with men, women and children have taken shelter from the deluge let loose by Indra. The mountain is, interestingly enough, shown consisting of separate hills as well as parts of a town. In the second panel Indra is begging for forgiveness of Kṛṣṇa for causing rain.

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Plate V

Narmadeśvara Temple

'Śiva roaming the forest.'

Plate VI

Narmadeśvara Temple

'Mahiṣamardinī Devī.'

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Plate VII

Narmadeśvara Temple

'Kṛṣṇa sucking Pūtanā.'

Plate VIII

Narmadeśvara Temple

'Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma with Nanda.'

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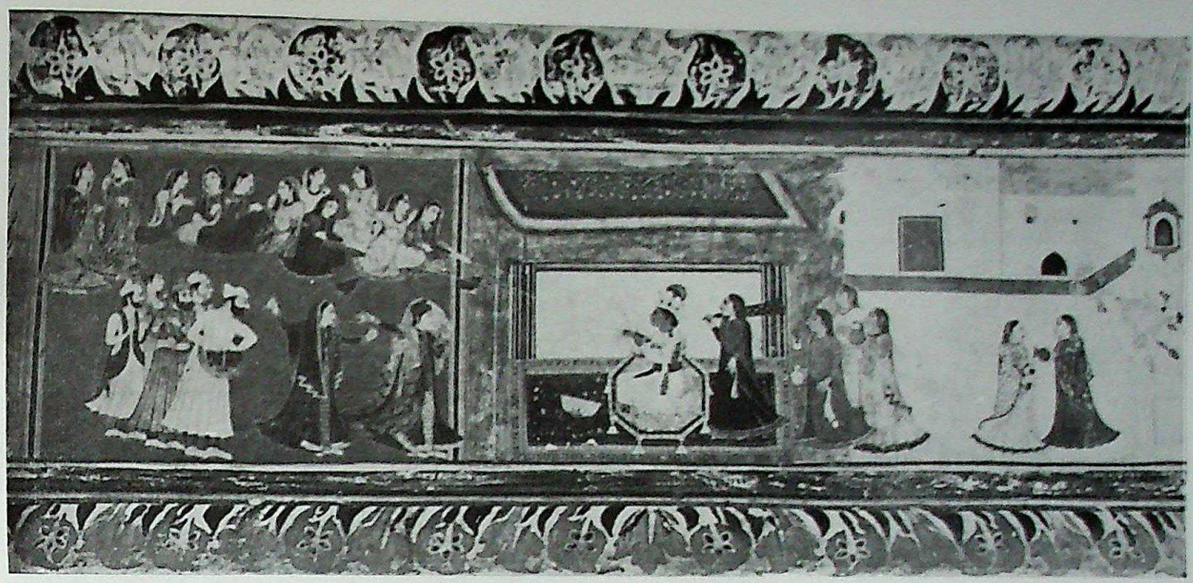

Fig. 25 *Sujānpur Tirā, Narmadeśvara Temple—'Kṛṣṇa listening to music.'*

Narmadeśvara is one of the few places where Kṛṣṇa is represented as a king. He is seen there sitting on a throne and listening to music (Fig. 25). In two other panels the friendship of Kṛṣṇa for Sudāma is very touchingly portrayed. In one, Sudāma enters Kṛṣṇa's *darbār* with a great deal of hesitation, holding his humble bag of beaten rice behind his back and looking at Kṛṣṇa seated on a throne along with Rukminī. In the second panel, Sudāma, clothed in poor apparel, stands overawed at the sight of a grand palace which, in his absence, had sprung up in the place of his simple hut. Here the artist, instead of illustrating the entire legend has portrayed the humble Sudāma's wonder and hesitation, as well as his fear of his possible welcome by his old friend. The colours of the paintings are not distinct, but the expression on the faces of the main figures is clearly indicative of their feelings.

Scenes from the Mahābhārata associated with Kṛṣṇa are also painted. An eloquent depiction of Draupadī's *chīraharaṇa* is found here. A typical Kāngrā Draupadī is shown wearing a black dress and praying to Kṛṣṇa while a man is pulling her *oḍhaṇī*. In the background stand the Pāṇḍavas with averted gazes, with the Kauravas in front led by Duryodhana smoking a *hookāh*. The colours of the painting have faded with the passage of time, but one can still taste the flavour of its original grace. There is also a small painting of Virāṭ Nagar where the Pāṇḍavas had retreated after their defeat in gambling at the hands of the Kauravas.

As fondness for the Rāma and Kṛṣṇa incarnations of Viṣṇu did not preclude the artist from depicting his other incarnations, a comparatively unsophisticated painting depicts the *Virāṭa-rūpa* of Viṣṇu in which he is shown as balancing Kāsī on his nozzle. Viṣṇu as *Vāmana Avatāra* visiting the court of Rājā Bālī, is also illustrated here. In it *Vāmana* is portrayed as standing before Bālī asking for his boon of three steps of earth, and in the next, Bālī is seen lying on the ground offering his body. The *Nishkalaṅka Avatāra* of the future, the *Narasiṁha Avatāra* and the *Gajendra-moksha* legend are also found painted.

One of the most expressive and technically superior paintings at Sujānpur Tirā illustrates the renunciation of Rājā Gopī Chand (Plate X) in a long narrative panel. In the left hand

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corner of the painting Rājā Gopī Chand is sitting with folded hands in front of the three *Nātha gurūs*, begging for alms. The *Nāthas* advised him that he should come to them for this purpose after renouncing the world and begging for alms from his queens. On the right hand side the *rājā* is depicted in simple garments begging alms from his youngest and newest *rāṇī* while the other queens are looking down from the palace apartments in a distraught condition, with dishevelled hair, and beating their heads against walls and throwing down their ornaments. The drawing is not only expressive but also gives to the palace a three dimensional effect. The colouring of the panel is one of the highest accomplishments in paint found in this temple. Pale blue, pink, red, orange and green are used with such translucent effect that they give a pearly glow even to this day.

The three dimensional effect is also seen in a painting of Gaṇeśa seated on a bright carpet (Fig. 26).

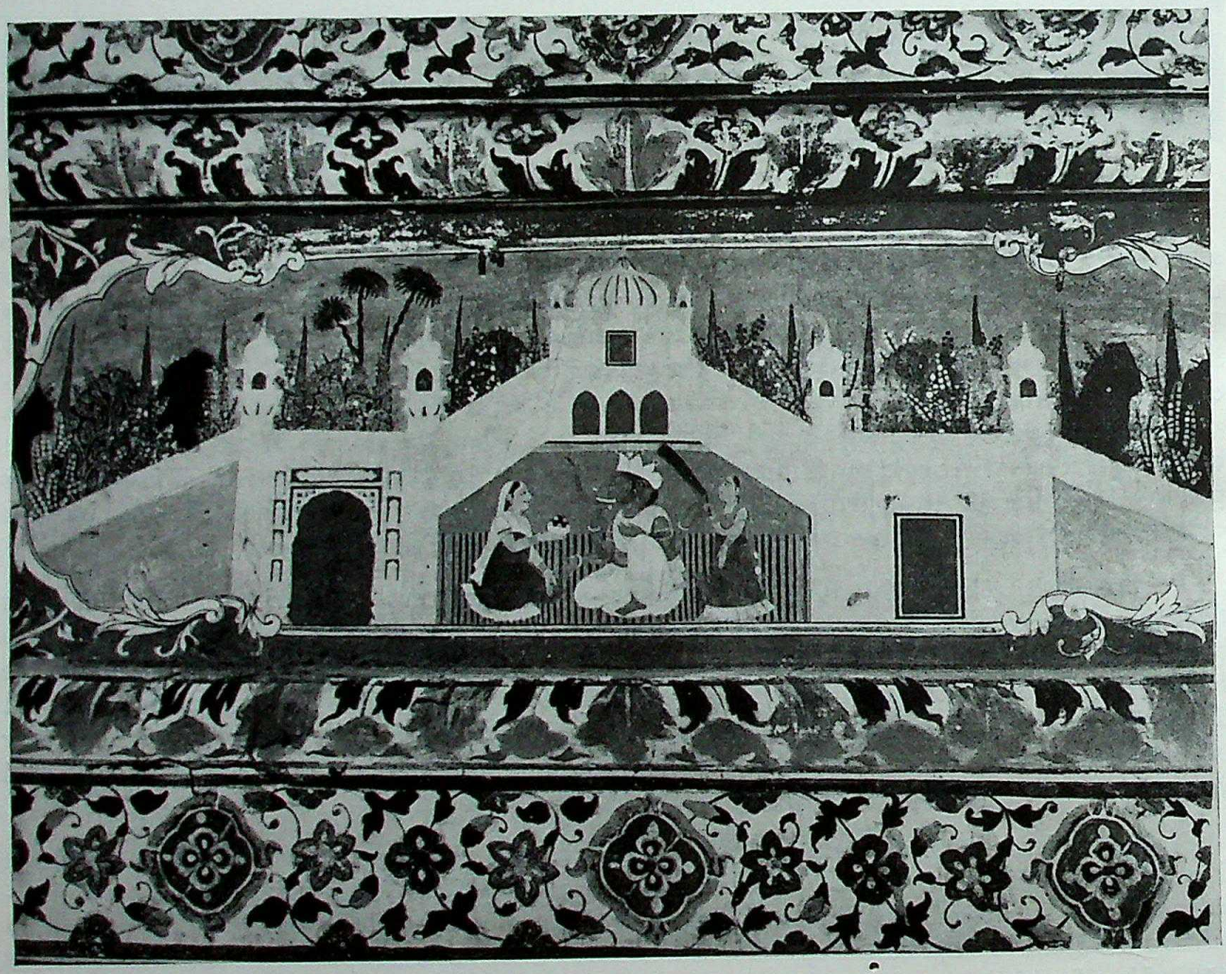

Fig. 26 *Sujānpur Tirā, Narmadeśvara Temple—'Gaṇeśa.'*

An interesting mythological illustration relates the story of Rājā Śriyans's fondness for *chaupār*. In one scene he is seen playing *chaupār* with Rājā Risālū with the wager of his head if he lost the game. He is then depicted begging Śriyans for his life in lieu of the present of his new born daughter. Rājā Risālū is shown in the next panel riding away with the infant on horse back.

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Plate IX

Narmadeśvara Temple

'Gopī Vastraharaṇa.'

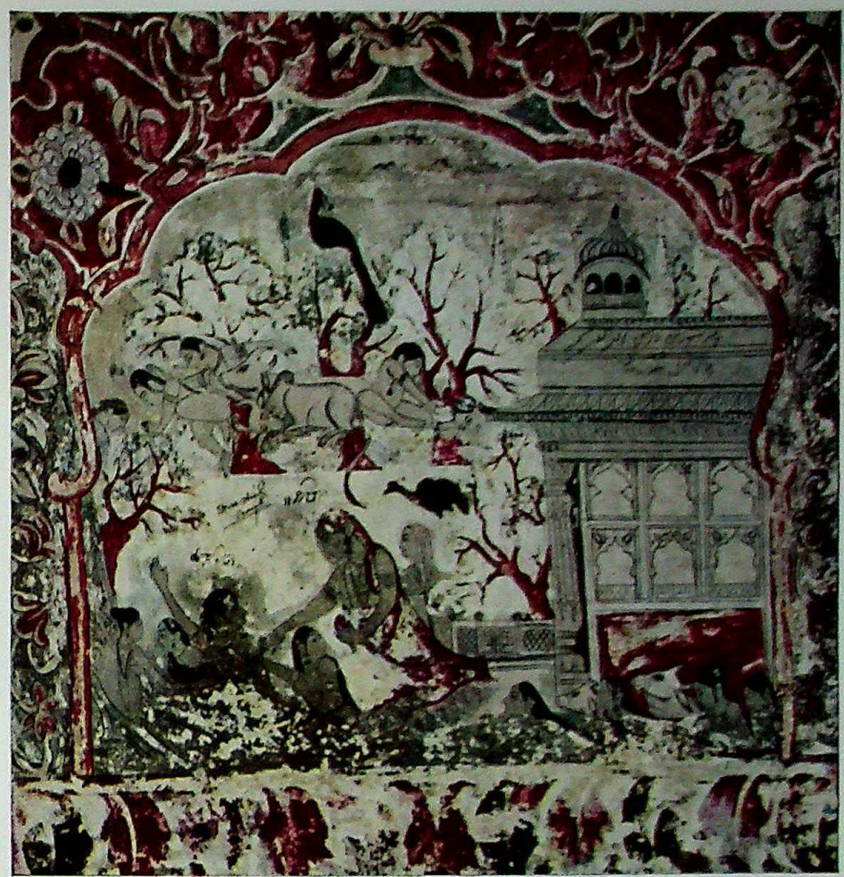

Plate X

Narmadeśvara Temple

'Rājā Gopī Chand's palace.'

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Narmadeśvara paintings indicate an awareness of the Sikh religion as seen from a painting of Gurū Nānak talking to Mardāna.

In the earliest wall paintings in the Himālayas, secular scenes are rarely found. Narmadeśvara is an exception to this. In one panel is depicted Rājā Sansār Chand standing in a forest. In another, he is shown standing with his courtiers in front of a *gurū* behind whom is illustrated a small temple. There is an illustration of the town of Vṛndāvana and finally, a beautiful hunting scene showing *rājās* and nobles out-hunting on horse back (Plate XI) painted in very vivid red, maroon, orange, green, blue and brown colours.

Gaurīśaṅkara Temple

On a hill top above Narmadeśvara temple is an old fort with a small temple. This temple, known as the Gaurīśaṅkara temple, has walls covered with paintings. According to local tradition it was built by Rājā Sansār Chand in Vikrama Saṁvat 1862 corresponding to A.D. 1804. Architecturally, the Gaurīśaṅkara temple is somewhat unconventional as it does not follow the norms laid down in the ancient treatises on temple architecture. The images of Śiva and Pārvatī also do not conform to the conventional iconographic types. Śiva here looks like a Pahāḍī young man and Pārvatī has the features of a Rājpūt woman of the hills (Fig. 22). Its non-conformity may be partly explained by the fact that it was not meant to be a temple for the public but only a private chapel.

Sansār Chand lived in this fort after his political ambition of dominance over the entire hill region had ended due to the Gorkhā invasion and subsequent Sikh domination. It seems that Sansār Chand then devoted his entire time and declining energies to his favourite pastime—the pursuit of pleasure. According to the legend he shut himself up in this fort with his favourite dancing girl Jamālo and refused to see his courtiers. The courtiers would come up to the fort, salute a tree standing in front of the royal apartments and depart, having paid their homage through the tree to their prince.

These paintings are locally believed to have been executed by artists from Delhi or by the Bujherū family of Brahmin artists who are supposed to have painted the walls of the Narmadeśvara. The paintings in the Gaurīśaṅkara temple represent Rājā Sansār Chand's tastes in a very direct and uninhibited manner. Like his way of life at this time, the paintings are dedicated to the pursuit of love in a frank and open manner without any sheltering behind the curtain of any religious symbols. Here lovers are shown seated on balconies admiring the beautiful scenery or (Plate XII) taking a stroll through the gardens where entwined creepers and pairs of birds seem to echo their love. Like all conventional Indian lovers they are rapturously happy in listening to music which is shown in one of the panels (Plate XIII). It is perhaps as an apology or an afterthought of their sheer abandon to passion that a few other themes were introduced. Near the ceiling are floral designs, interspersed among them are very small panels showing Śiva and Pārvatī in the forest with Gaṅeśa, a lady playing on her *vīṇā*, the Devī and a few beautiful *rāṇīs*.

The drawing of the Gaurīśaṅkara paintings is very similar to that of the Narmadeśvara; the style is typical of the Kāngrā school patronised by Sansār Chand. Most of the colours of these paintings have faded perhaps due to the use of strong incense in the temple. Whatever remains is proof of excellent quality. The artists not only broke convention by painting secular themes here but also in drawing and painting them in a very naturalistic fashion. For the first time, in Pahāḍī

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wall paintings are found mountains and hills painted as they are observed in nature. The foot-hills are painted in rich green shades; little higher up the mountains become brown tinged with the orange of the sun's rays, and finally are shown the snow covered peaks (Plate XIII). The paintings of these mountains are so realistic that when one visits this temple, one finds almost similar mountainscape outside the temple as was painted by artists nearly a hundred and seventy years ago inside its precincts. The use of light yellow, orange, green, red and blue gives the effect of spring, the season of love which the patrons and artists wanted to portray.

Damtāl

Damtāl is situated in the Nūrpur tehsil of the Kāngrā district, about 16 or 17 km. from Paṭhānkoṭ. There is a *maṭha* or a monastery here which contains beautiful paintings. According to the present *mahaṅta*, Lāl Dās, this *maṭha* was built by Bhagwān Nārāyaṇajī who was a Vaiṣṇava *vairāgī* of the Rāmānanda *sampradāya*, in about Vikrama Saṁvat 1500, approximating to A.D. 1442. According to local tradition, however, the *maṭha* was built in the reign of Jahāngīr;

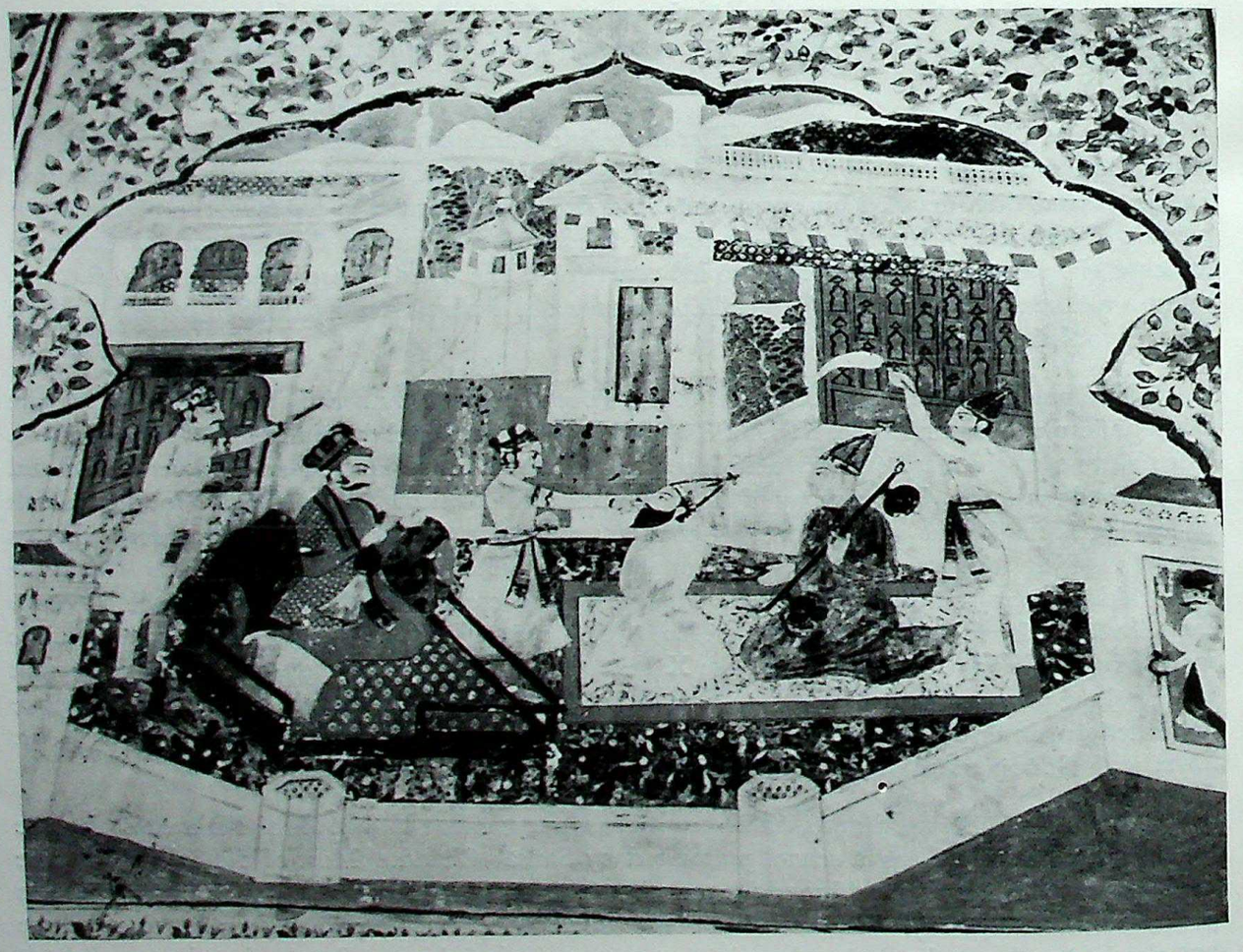

Fig. 27 *Damtāl—'Bhagwān Nārāyaṇajī drinking poison sent by Jahāngīr.'*

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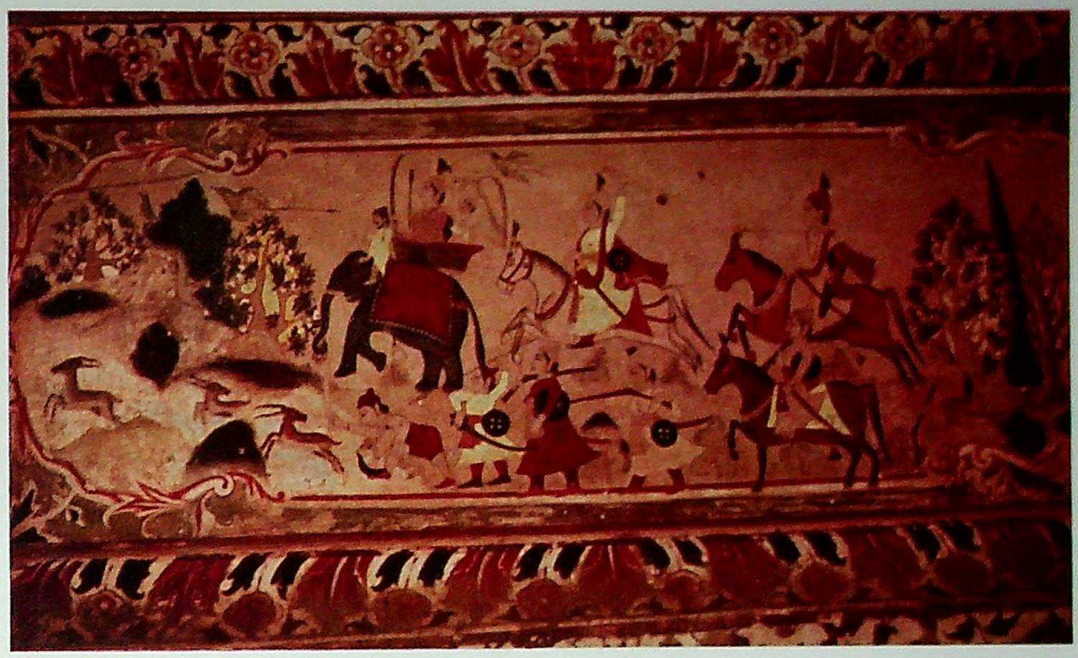

Plate XI

Narmadeśvara Temple

'*Rājās* and nobles on a hunt.'

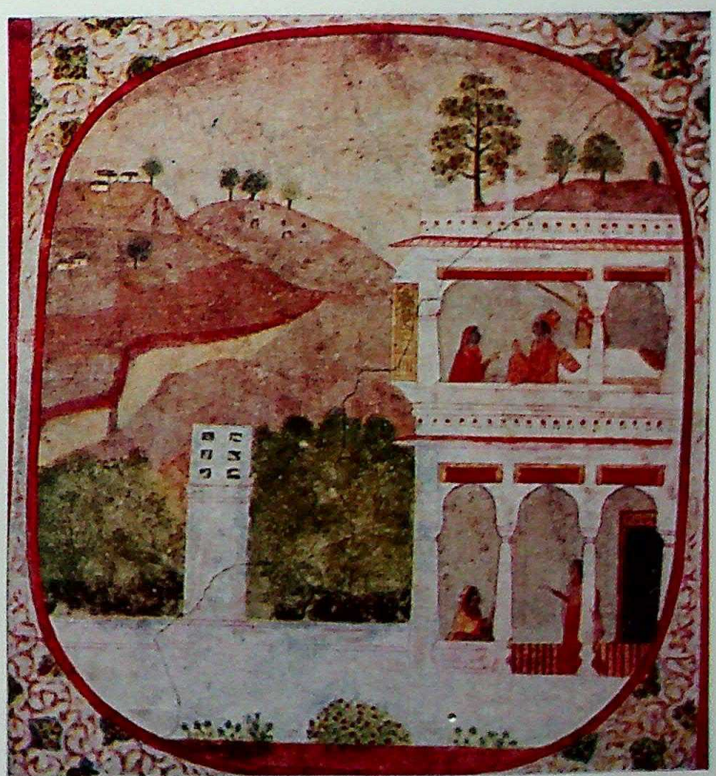

Plate XII

Gaurīśaṅkara Temple

'Sansār Chand and Jamālo sitting in a balcony and talking to each other.'

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one of the paintings depicting the Emperor enticing Bhagwān Nārāyaṇaji to drink poison, is supposed to prove this assertion (Fig. 27). On the other hand, J. C. French[3] who studied the paintings of this area thought that it was constructed during the reign of Aurangzeb because, in his opinion, the architecture of the *maṭha* corresponds to the period of Aurangzeb. He came to the conclusion that A.D. 1690 would be a reasonable date for its erection. This appears to be a reasonable hypothesis. The style of the paintings would, however, indicate that they were executed in early nineteenth century. It is quite certain that the Goomtal described by Lala Ganeshī Lāl in his *Siyāhat-i-Kāshmīr*[4] as lying about 8 km. from Paṭhānkoṭ, was Damtāl. "This village," he states "belongs to the Noorpore Chiefship and is held rent free by Gopāl Dās a Byrāgee. The Head medicant, Bābā Gopāl Dās, has a large home like a fort, and is erecting another which promises to rise into a noble building. The hand of the famous painter of Noorpore, Bishan Dās, has shown utmost perseverance of his art at this place." It is possible that Bishan Dās may have executed these murals but this cannot be supported by any definite evidence.

The *maṭha* is a double-storeyed structure. On the ground floor there is a big verandah which must have originally been a big hall about 15 meters in length and 6 in width. The walls of this verandah are covered with paintings done in niches in the Mughal fashion. The paintings are executed in panels varying in size and, though they may be as large as 90 cm. × 105 cm. the figures are all drawn as they would have been in miniatures, and are bordered by floral designs. The drawing of these panels indicates that the artists must have been conversant with the previous wall painting tradition as they have painted narrative panels on larger scales and with very effective use of space. Both curved and straight lines have been used in the drawing with a deft and confident touch. The panels cover the entire wall of the verandah and are painted in an arrangement of horizontal and verticle sub-divisions.

There are no paintings found here which have preserved all their colours; yet whatever remains of the colours indicates that they were applied in harmonious combinations and in soft tones. Traces of white, light green, red ochre, yellow ochre, blue, black, maroon and pink are visible.

Thematically speaking, the paintings do not suffer from monotony. They contain illustrations from the legends of Śiva, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma along with an interspersion of lesser known deities. Unfortunately, these compositions are not done in distinct blocks or rows but are mingled with each other. It is quite common to find one panel depicting the idyllic life of Śiva and in the other the Mahābhārata war. There is also no observance of the time sequence in the illustration of various legends. Two possible explanations can perhaps be regarded for this rather unusual collection of tales; first, it might have been due to the fact that all these paintings were not painted in the same period, or secondly, the panels were perhaps distributed to various artists who painted subjects of their own choice in the same stylistic tradition but without any thematic coordination. The first explanation seems unlikely because of the stylistic similarity of the paintings.

There are two panels illustrating the Śiva legend. In one, Śiva is seen sitting with Pārvati on Mount Kailāśa along with Gaṇeśa, Nandī, a peacock, a rat and a bull. In the other Śiva is painted alone. Neither of these paintings are distinct and only traces of green, black and maroon are decipherable.

The pictorial representations of the Kṛṣṇa saga have more variety in Damtāl. The emphasis, however, seems to be on the warrior aspect of Kṛṣṇa. As a young boy, Kṛṣṇa is

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shown holding aloft the Govardhana hill (Fig. 17). The drawing of the animals has been done naturalistically, but most of the colours have faded and only light green, maroon and black pigments are still evident. In another panel Kṛṣṇa is depicted touching the feet of Rādhā who is sitting on her bed as a *māninī nāyikā*. Kṛṣṇa as a boy playing with his cowherd friends, tenderly watched by Yaśodā, is also painted here. The best preserved panel is an illustration dealing with Kṛṣṇa's role in the Mahābhārata. It contains a painting of Kṛṣṇa climbing into a chariot and leaving for the Kurukshetra war while Rukminī is bidding him a respectful farewell by touching his feet (Fig. 16). In another panel he is shown giving his famous discourse to Arjuna. There are many scenes of fighting between the Kaurava and the Pāṇḍava armies. To add poignancy to the terrors of war, there is a panel where a woman, drawn very tenderly, is seen praying in a temple for the welfare of her loved ones who have gone to war. There is an interesting panel which depicts Kṛṣṇa seated as a warrior on an elephant in a battle field surrounded by soldiers on elephants and horses, although, according to legend, Kṛṣṇa is not known to have actually taken part in the great war.

There are a few elegant paintings of the Rāma legend in which Sītā figures. A very touching illustration of Sītā's *svayaṁvara* depicts her garlanding Rāma who is bending a bow, while Rājā Janaka and Viśvāmitra are looking approvingly at the young couple. Scenes of Rāma and Lakshmaṇa looking sadly across an expanse of water perhaps refer to Sītā's abduction. There are a few panels exhibiting Rāma and Lakshmaṇa making preparations for war and actually encouraging their armies in the fight with Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa is also depicted in one of his palaces in the company of his queen and princesses. Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmaṇa, returning with their armies to Ayodhyā after the period of exile, are also painted. The most significant painting of the Rāma legend which is preserved in a very good state is an illustration of Rāma and Sītā sitting on a throne under a canopy inside a *shāmiānā* surrounded by the ladies of the palace, while Hanumāna and Sugrīva are paying homage to them. A very effective use has been made of space in illustrating this small panel (Fig. 28). Rāma and Sītā are in the main *shāmiānā* and the courtiers are shown seated in a separate *shāmiānā* in the compound. In another corner of the compound, female musicians and dancers are performing. On both sides of the composition are palace balconies from which royal ladies are shown observing the festivities in the compound.

A beautiful illustration of the *samudramanthana* or churning of the sea for nectar by the *devatās* and *rākshasas* is also found here. Two panels depict Viṣṇu reclining on the *Śeṣanāga* while Lakshmī is pressing his feet.

There are only two panels illustrating secular scenes. One illustrates Bhagwān Nārāyaṇa Dās (to whom the execution of the paintings is attributed by the *maṭha* authorities) conversing with Jahāngīr. In the other panel is painted a marriage *paṇḍāl* decorated with leaves and parrots, which is very similar to a scene illustrated in the Piṇḍorī paintings.

Damtāl, First Floor

The walls of one of the first floor rooms of this *maṭha* have numerous paintings on them. There is reason to believe that these paintings were later than those which are found on the walls of the verandah of the *maṭha*. They seem to have been done when the Sikh impact in these hills was already on the decline and Europeans had made their appearance in these regions. It is, therefore, likely that these paintings were executed after A.D. 1850.

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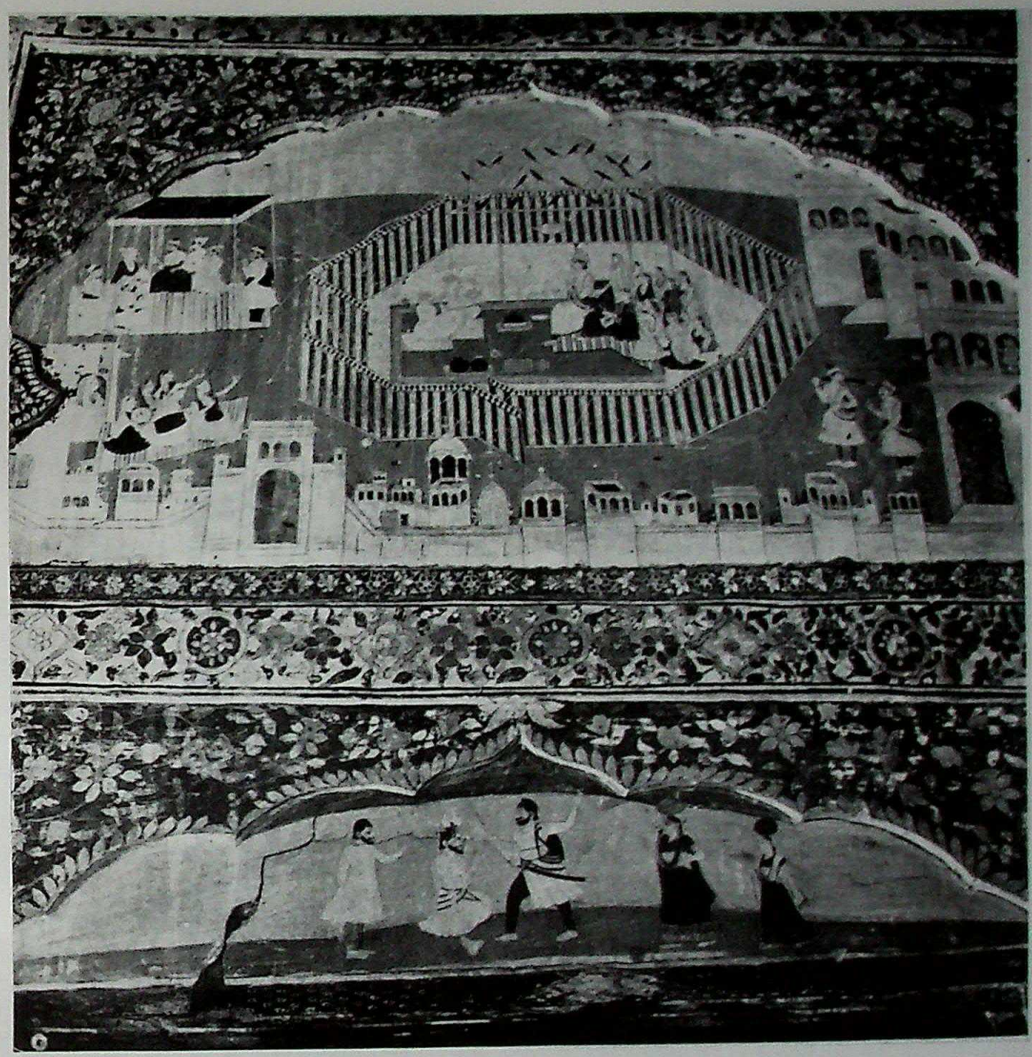

Fig. 28 *Damtāl—'The darbār of Rāma' and 'A Sādhū with his devotees.'*

The room in which all these paintings are found had its walls covered by thirty rows of paintings which contain mostly vertical panels while near the ceiling are a few horizontal ones. Themes illustrated here include episodes from the Rāmāyaṇa, particularly in regard to the exile of Rāma. The pronouncement of Rāma's exile by Kaikeyī and Rāma, Lakshmaṇa and Sītā departing to the forest are rendered rather effectively. The most interesting depiction of the Rāmāyaṇa theme, however, consists of an illustration of Śūrpanākhā's visit to the hut of Rāma, Lakshmaṇa and Sītā in the forest (Fig. 29), Śūrpaṇākhā's advances towards Rāma, Lakshmaṇa and finally the cutting of her nose by Lakshmaṇa. As a sequel to the illustration of this theme, the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa and Rāma's attack on Lañkā and his final success are also presented here with some amount of clarity. It is interesting to note that most of the male characters in these illustrations are shown with beards worn in the Sikh fashion which is presumably due to the effect of Sikh influence in these areas.

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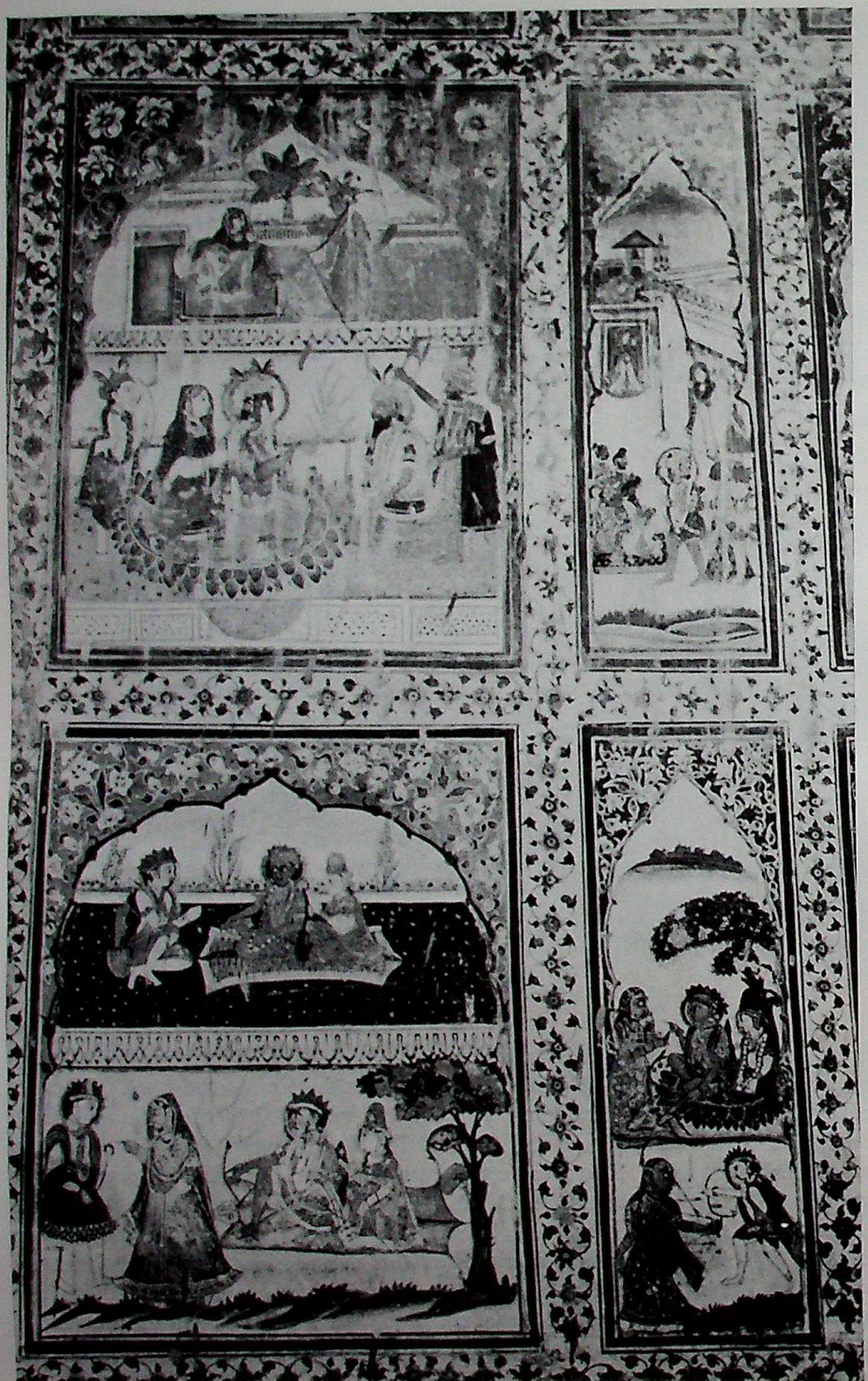

Fig. 29 *Damtāl, first floor—'Rāma and Sītā in the forest.'*

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Apart from illustrations done on the Rāmāyaṇa theme, there are a few other panels given to secular subjects. A European couple, both wearing hats, driving in a horse-drawn carriage and the Mughal Emperor Jahāngīr offering poison to Bhagwān Nārayaṇajī (Fig. 27) deserve to be mentioned in this connection. The worship of the Devī and Gaṇeśa is also painted in two separate panels.

Dharamsāl

There is a *maṭha* in Dharamsāl, which is located about 40 km. north of Hoshiārpur, near the famous Chintpurnī temple in Kāngrā. The present *mahañta*, Lakshmaṇa Dās, disclosed[5] that this *maṭha* had been established by Bābā Nakodar Dās in Akbar's time. He was a local religious leader, a *Pañchadeva-upāsaka* who gave the pride of place to the worship of Viṣṇu. The *mahañta* has a *sanad* which is believed to have been given to his predecessor by Emperor Aurangzeb in the ninth year of his reign, corresponding to A.D. 1667. It is, therefore, very likely that the *maṭha* has a long history behind it.

There are two buildings in Dharamsāl, containing murals. The style of the paintings in one is entirely different from that in the other. The best and earliest paintings are found in what is known as the *baiṭhak* which happens to be the sitting room (6 m. × 4.75 m.) of one building. Most of the paintings have disintegrated but those which remain have a graceful charm of their own. What is most remarkable about them is their fine, graceful and lyrical lines and their refined colour scheme in which pastel shades predominate. According to Mahañta Lakshmaṇa Dās, these paintings were executed by a *mistrī* (mason) from Haryānā in his grandfather's time, which would place them at about the end of the nineteenth century.

The paintings in the *baiṭhak* have not been grouped in any thematic sequence. There is, as in most other centres of wall paintings, a profusion of panels dealing with the Kṛṣṇa legend. Kṛṣṇa's life as a cowherd boy is painted with great fondness for colour and movement. Kṛṣṇa's love for cows is seen in a gentle scene where he is shown as milking a cow while the cow looks tenderly at him. The artists also took delight in depicting Kṛṣṇa's playful moods; in one panel he is seen teasing the *gopīs* and then returning to the protection of Nanda and Yośodā, and in another he is shown illustrated stealing butter from the *gopīs* (Fig. 14). In both these panels there are landscapes with an attractive rural setting. The grass is painted in parrot green, with undulating hills in the background. The red blue and orange skirts of the *gopīs* lend a vivid contrast to the gentleness of the landscape.

A few panels depicting other mythological legends are also present. A not very distinct painting of Śiva and Pārvatī shows them riding their mounts into the woods. Two illustrations of the Rāma legend are also found. Here the artist prefers to concentrate on depicting the grandeur of Rāma's coronation *darbār*. In a *darbār* scene Rāma is shown as watching court dancers. It is curious that Śiva is depicted attending the coronation of Rāma. The Viṣṇu legend is represented in one painting in which Viṣṇu is shown as reclining on the *Śeṣanāga*, while Lakshmī is pressing his feet.

The most remarkable aspect of the paintings found in the Mahañta's *baiṭhak* at Dharamsāl is the variety of secular themes. They seem to be painted to illustrate the colourful and romantic aspect of the life of the common people. There is a very attractive painting of a beautiful village damsel dressed in colourful clothes, sitting besides the village-well and offering water to a passing

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gallant. The background rural scenery is as delicately painted as the settings for Kṛṣṇa's playfulness with the *gopīs*. The people's love for music is seen in the beautiful illustrations found on one of the doors of the *baiṭhak*, which contain female musicians playing on different musical instruments. A charming and expressive painting of a lady snake charmer playing on her pipe is also an attractive piece (Fig. 11). A delightful panel illustrates four male dancers beating their sticks in rhythmic movements (Fig. 6). The artist also showed his awareness of the arrival of the British in the hill areas. There is a small illustration of an Englishman seated on a stool and dispensing justice to a few locals who are standing in front of him with folded hands. A soldier standing with a dagger is also seen in one of the panels. A naked *fakīr* is also painted near one of the doors.

There is a small temple in the *maṭha* in which the relics and photographs of some of the deceased *mahañtas* of this denomination are preserved. The walls of this temple too are covered with paintings. There is, on the whole, a clear impress of folk art on these paintings. The drawing is somewhat crude when one compares it with the lyrically graceful drawing of the murals on the walls of the *baiṭhak* of the *maṭha*. Since the Sikhs were at this time an important component of the hill society of these areas, one notices that in many panels legendary characters are also shown with beards and turbans worn in the Sikh fashion (Fig. 30). This is again indicative of the fact that the paintings are of a later origin. In the colour scheme there is a preponderance of maroon, dark green and black.

Fig. 30 *Dharamsāl Mahañtāñ—'Rāma and Lakshmaṇa.'*

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Fig. 31 *Dharamsāl Mahañtañ—'Kṛṣṇa playing with the gopīs.'*

Fig. 32 *Dharamsāl Mahañtañ—'Mahiṣamardinī Devī.'*

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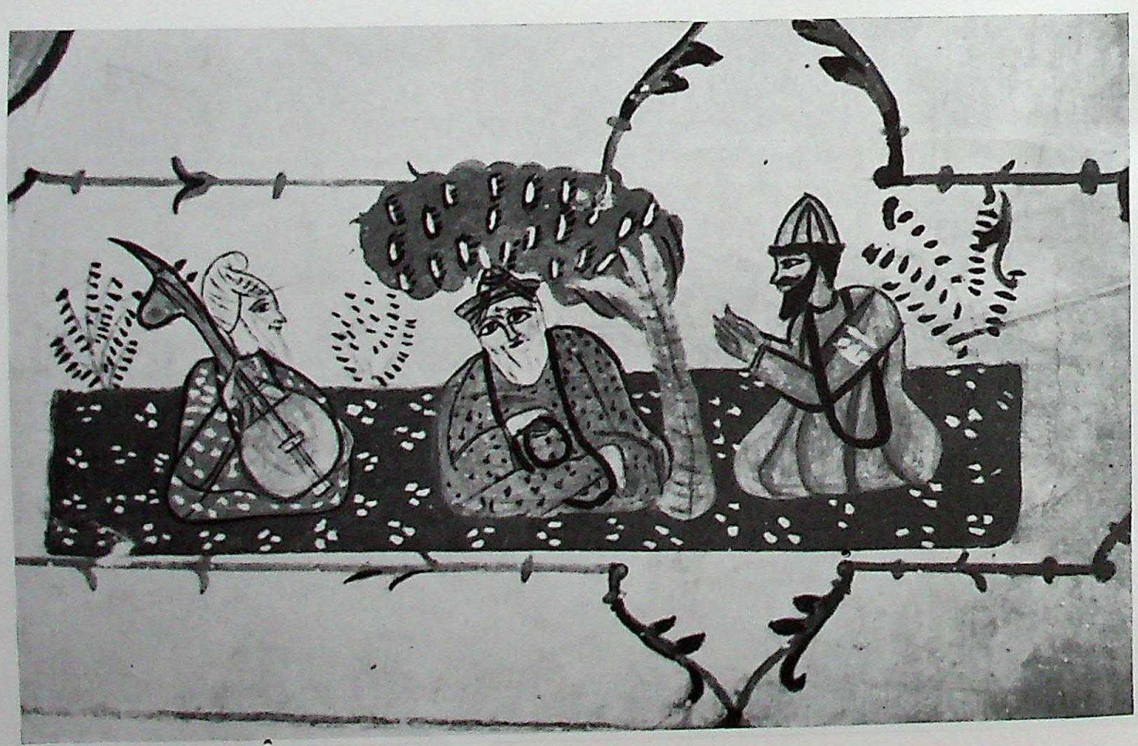
Fig. 33 *Dharamsāl Mahañtañ—'Devī receiving homage.'*

Fig. 34 *Dharamsāl Mahañtañ—'Gurū Nānak talking to his devotees.'*



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The theme which appealed most to the artists here was Rāma's search for Sītā after she had been abducted by Rāvaṇa. A big panel drawn with a good knowledge of mural painting and illustrated as a continuous narrative shows Rāma's armies of monkeys and bears engaged in mortal combat with the *rākshasa* armies of Rāvaṇa. In the right side corner of this painting Rāma is shown as shooting an arrow at the golden deer sent by Rāvaṇa. There is also an interesting painting of Rāma on horse back, followed by his brother Lakshmaṇa and an attendant carrying an umbrella. Hanumāna carrying Rāma and Lakshmaṇa on his shoulders finds a place in one of the panels.

Kṛṣṇa is painted here as flying a kite with Rādhā by his side, and as stealing butter from the *gopīs* (Fig. 14) and playing with the *gopīs* (Fig. 31). He is also shown as one of the heroes of the Mahābhārata, handing over an arrow to Arjuna.

The Śiva legend as illustrated here lays emphasis on the Devī who is portrayed as fighting with the Mahiṣāsura *rākshasa* (Fig. 32) and subsequently receiving homage from her devotees (Fig. 33). Śiva and Pārvatī's romance is also illustrated in a panel, both riding on Nandī while returning after their wedding in the Himālayan abode of Pārvatī's father.

A few solitary mythological panels illustrate the legends of Śravaṇa Kumāra, *Narasiṁha Avatāra* of Viṣṇu, and Viṣṇu seated on a lotus receiving the homage of his devotees.

In a number of panels there are representations of contemporary or near contemporary historical figures from the history of the Sikhs. There is a clear and powerfully drawn panel depicting the one-eyed Mahārājā Ranjīt Singh sitting on a stool, with an attendant behind him and listening to his courtiers. Sikh nobles going out on horse back, followed by their attendants are also shown; and finally a small panel illustrating Gurū Nānak seated under a tree and talking to his devotees (Fig. 34). Muslim influence can also be noticed in the illustrations of female angels wearing caps, presented in the Muslim fashion.

Dādā Sibā

Dādā Sibā was a small state whose ruling dynasty was an offshoot of the house of Kāngrā. Rājā Rām Singh who ruled over the state about two hundred years ago, was a man of refined taste[6].

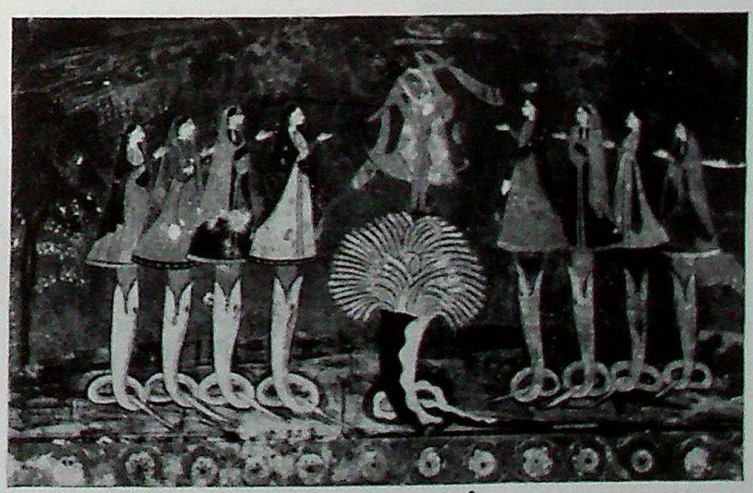

Fig. 35 *Dādā Sibā, Rādhā Kṛṣṇa Mandir—'Kalīyā Mada-mardana.'*

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The location of his palace on the top of a hill and the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple built by him in the green thickness of a wooded place, seem to indicate that he had a sense of beauty. The walls of this temple are covered with murals.

The name of the artist (or artists) of these paintings is not known. These are somewhat inferior in style to the paintings at Dharamsāl. A medley of themes are illustrated here. The drawing is flat with an accent on squat figures and the colouring lacks in lustre; it consists mostly of dull shades of bottle green, red, orange and brown which are covered with a lustreless varnish.

As elsewhere in the hills, the Kṛṣṇa legend seems to have been very popular here as well. He is painted in association with the *gopīs* and the cowherds and with Rādhā with whom he is shown in dalliance. The theme of the subjugation of the *Kāliyā* (Fig. 35) snake also finds a place here, so does that of Kṛṣṇa's marriage with Rukminī, which is seen in the Piṇḍorī Darbār murals too. There is besides, one panel given to the theme of *Kuñjara-Kāminī* which is but a group of women (*Kāminī*) arranged in the shape and form of an elephant (*Kuñjara*), a theme which is quite popular with the contemporary miniaturists.

Fig. 36 *Dādā Sibā, Palace —'A soldier.'*

The Rāma legend was also quite popular with the artists of this temple as is evident from the representations of Sītā's *svayaṁvara*, Rāma and Lakshmaṇa killing *rākshasas* and Rāma's coronation with the other *devatās* paying homage to him. An interesting composition consists of an illustration of the *darbār* of Sugrīva, where the monkey king is being offered homage by other monkeys.

Sikh influence had already penetrated deep in the hills by the time Dādā Sibā paintings were executed. A general reverence for Gurū Nānak is indicated by a panel portraying the Gurū sitting alone under a tree. There is also a painting of the Sikh *rājās* meeting Pahāḍī *rājās*. A panel with the romantic theme of Lailā carrying water in a cup to an emaciated Majnū also finds a place here. Assorted themes like Viṣṇu reclining on Śeṣanāga while Lakshmī is pressing his feet, Devī receiving homage, the *Varāha Avatāra* of Viṣṇu, and Śiva and Pārvatī seated in a forest are also represented but in a very indifferent manner ; the quality of drawing and painting is poor.

The palace at Dādā Sibā must have also been originally covered with paintings. It is now completely in ruins and only one painting of a soldier (Fig. 36) is intact. Large in size and with broad sweeps of brush, this painting seems to have been done in real mural style.

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Plate XIII

Gaurīśaṅkara Temple

'Lovers admiring the beauty of nature and listening to music.'

Plate XIIIa *Gaurīśaṅkara Temple* A detail from Plate XIII illustrating the local landscape.

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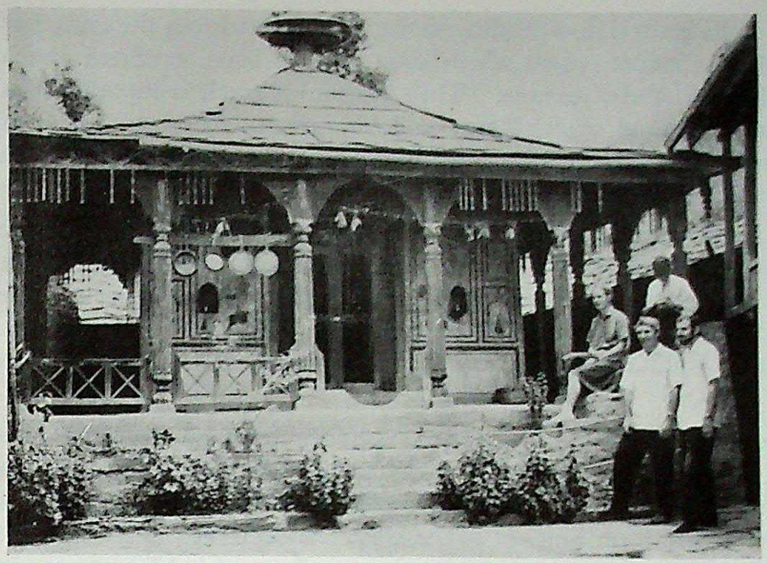

Fig. 37 *Shogī, Gopāl Mandir, the temple.*

SIMLĀ DISTRICT

Gopāl Mandir, Shogī

This temple is situated in a valley located about 7 or 8 km. below Shogī, a small village on the Kālkā-Simlā Road, about 10 km. before Simlā. The temple is built of wood and its architecture is not very much unlike wooden structures of the Himālayan region (Fig. 37). It is dedicated to Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. According to an inscription on the door-way of the temple, it was built by a *khwāsi* (mistress) of the ruler of Keonthāl state, in A.D. 1820[7]. Elegant and sophisticated paintings are found on all the four walls of this temple. The style of drawing is one of the most refined ones found in the Pāhāḍī region. Curved, straight and rounded lines are used with a very definite and sure touch. A special feature of the drawing of Shogī is its power and vitality.

These paintings have suffered greatly from the ravages of time and most of the colours have faded. This is most unfortunate since those which are still relatively visible are very refined and sophisticated. The colours blend gently with each other and do not stand out in harsh contrasts. White, maroon, blue, orange, black, brown and red are the main colours used here.

Fig. 38 *Shogī, Gopāl Mandir—'Gopāl Kṛṣṇa.'*

Fig. 39 *Shogī, Gopāl Mandir—'Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.'*

Fig. 40 *Shogī, Gopāl Mandir—'Śiva and Pārvatī.'*

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On the wall on the left side of the central door leading to the shrine containing the images of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, there are a few indistinct panels which seem to have been executed much later than some of the better paintings of this temple. They consist of small compositions of Viṣṇu and Gaṇeśa seated in their traditional poses, Rāma and Hanumāna shooting arrows at Rāvaṇa, Rādhā offering a betel to Kṛṣṇa, a man in front of a house and a lady with a red rose in her hand. The colours of these paintings which are still visible are red and yellow.

There are two small panels illustrating the child Kṛṣṇa. In one of them he is lying on the leaf of a tree, sucking his thumb, while an old man stands with folded hands in silent salutation in front of him and in another standing as a cowherd (Fig. 38). Kṛṣṇa's *Govardhanadhāraṇa* episode and his departure in a chariot to take his place in the Kurukshetra war are also painted with imagination and taste. Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā holding hands and reclining on a cow are also painted (Fig. 39).

Although this temple was dedicated to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, episodes from the Devī and Śiva legends also find their place here. One of the best paintings at this centre is an illustration of Durgā killing Mahiṣāsura (Fig. 7). The figures of the *vāhana* of Mahiṣāsura and of the Devī herself are powerfully drawn. The expression of wrath on the face of the Devī has been admirably brought out. Devī is dressed in a pink *saḍī* whereas her tiger is painted in yellow and Mahiṣāsura in contrasting black. The background of the painting is white.

Another very graceful painting illustrates Śiva and Pārvatī seated on Nandī (Fig. 40). Śiva

Fig. 41 *Shogī, Gopāl Mandir—'A hunting scene.'*

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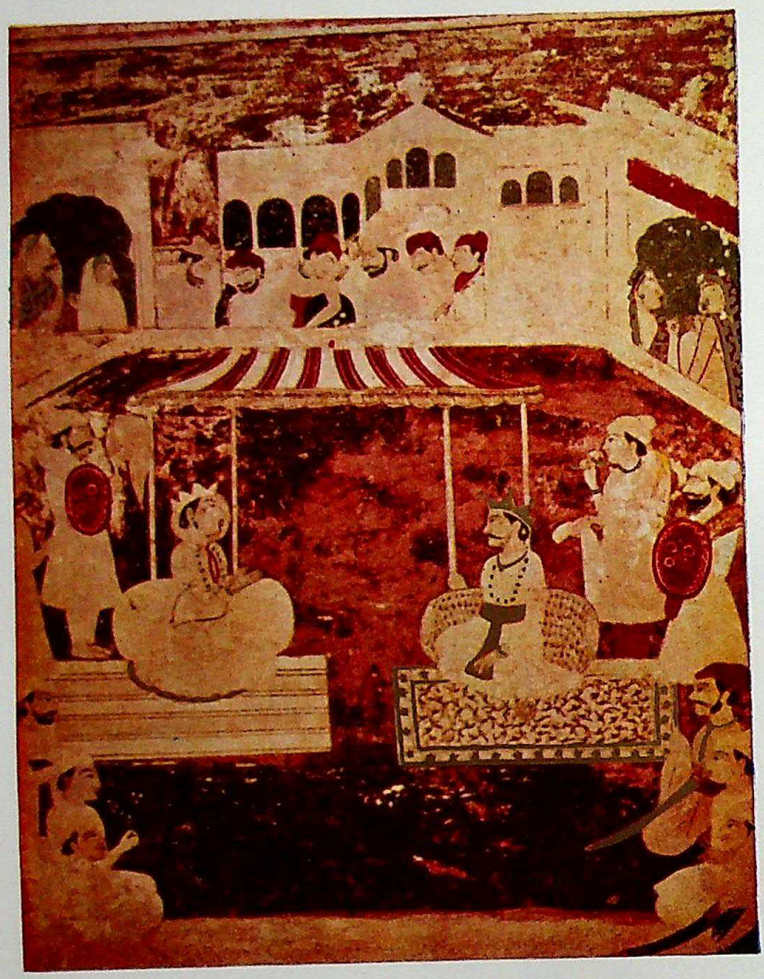

Plate XIV

Darbār, Piṇḍorī

'Kṛṣṇa's marriage party in Rukminī's home.'

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is holding a *ḍamaru* (musical instrument) in his hand while Pārvatī is offering him a drink in a small cup. Pārvatī is wearing a dress of pink and red and Śiva is wearing a white *dhotī* with black dots.

There is a painting showing Viṣṇu reclining on the *Śeṣanāga* and killing Hiraṇyakaśipu. A panel from the Rāmāyaṇa depicts Rāma on horse back, followed by his three brothers and Hanumāna and Sugrīva. Rāma's coronation and Sarasvatī seated on a swan are also found painted here. There are two very interesting paintings here which clearly point out to Muslim influence. In one of them Lailā is offering a cup of drink to an emaciated Majnū. In the other panel there is a most tender illustration of the *Ṭoḍī Rāginī* found anywhere in Pahāḍī painting. (Fig. 9). It is painted with exquisite delicacy of line and colour. The lovely heroine separated from her lover is depicted playing forlornly on her small stringed instrument, while an equally beautiful deer looks at her with sympathy. Unfortunately the colours of both these panels have faded badly; traces alone of light blue and green remain.

Two very interesting panels seem to have been attempted as studies in composition of crowds and of movement. In one of them a *rājā* is seen going out on a hunt with his courtiers, all of them on horses, and accompanied by dogs (Fig. 41). In the other, two armies with their elephants, cavalry and infantry are seen in confrontation. In both the scenes the drawing of human figures as well as of animals is precise and conveys the impression of movement, excitement and tension. The colours of these paintings are black, brown, green, maroon and yellow, while the backgrounds are white.

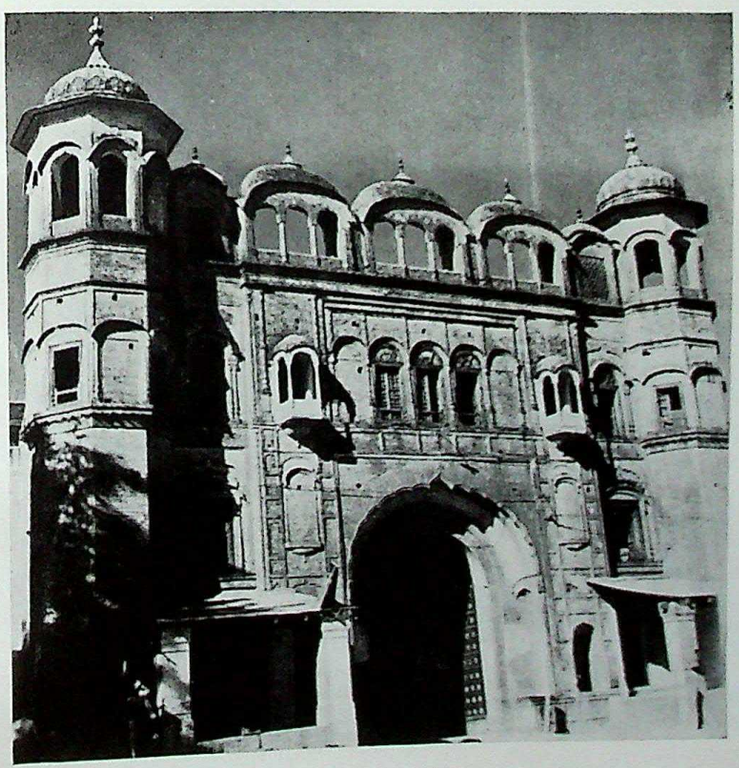

Fig. 42 *Piṇḍorī Darbār.*

GURDĀSPUR DISTRICT

Pindorī Darbār

About 10 km. from Gurdāspur town there is a big *maṭha*, known as Piṇḍorī Darbār or Piṇḍorī *mahañtañ* or the *gaddī* of Bhagwān Nārāyaṇa Dās (Fig. 42). According to tradition, a Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* was established here by a Vaiṣṇava saint, known as Bhagwānjī, who was a contemporary of Jahāngīr. It is reported that the *maṭha* was constructed by Jahāngīr in Vikrama Saṁvat 1679 corresponding to A.D. 1622, in admiration of Mahañta Nārāyaṇa Dās[8] who had swallowed

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seven cups of poison administered by Jahāngīr to test his occult powers. Raghunāthjī's temple which contains most of the paintings found in the Darbār, was built in Vikrama Saṁvat 1872, corresponding to A.D. 1815, during the *gaddī* of Mahañta Narottam Dās (A.D. 1807-1843) with donations from the rulers of Kāngrā hills as well as from the *rājās* of Kāshmīr and Mahārājā Ranjit Singh[9]. The walls of this temple are covered with paintings. Stylistically speaking, the paintings can perhaps be dated between A.D. 1816 and 1830. The artist or artists responsible for executing them are unknown although it has been conjectured that the main artist may have belonged to the family of Pañḍit Seu of Guler. On stylistic grounds there does not seem to be any proof for such an assumption as they are slightly different from the typical Kāngrā style of paintings as found at Narmadeśvara, Nadaun and Shogī.

The drawing of Raghunāthjī's temple paintings is fairly advanced in technique and quite competent. Effective use has been made of architectural perspective and movement of the figures has been rendered in a dramatic manner. There is evidence of Mughal influence on the drawing as seen in certain samples of female angels dressed in Mughal fashion (Fig. 43).

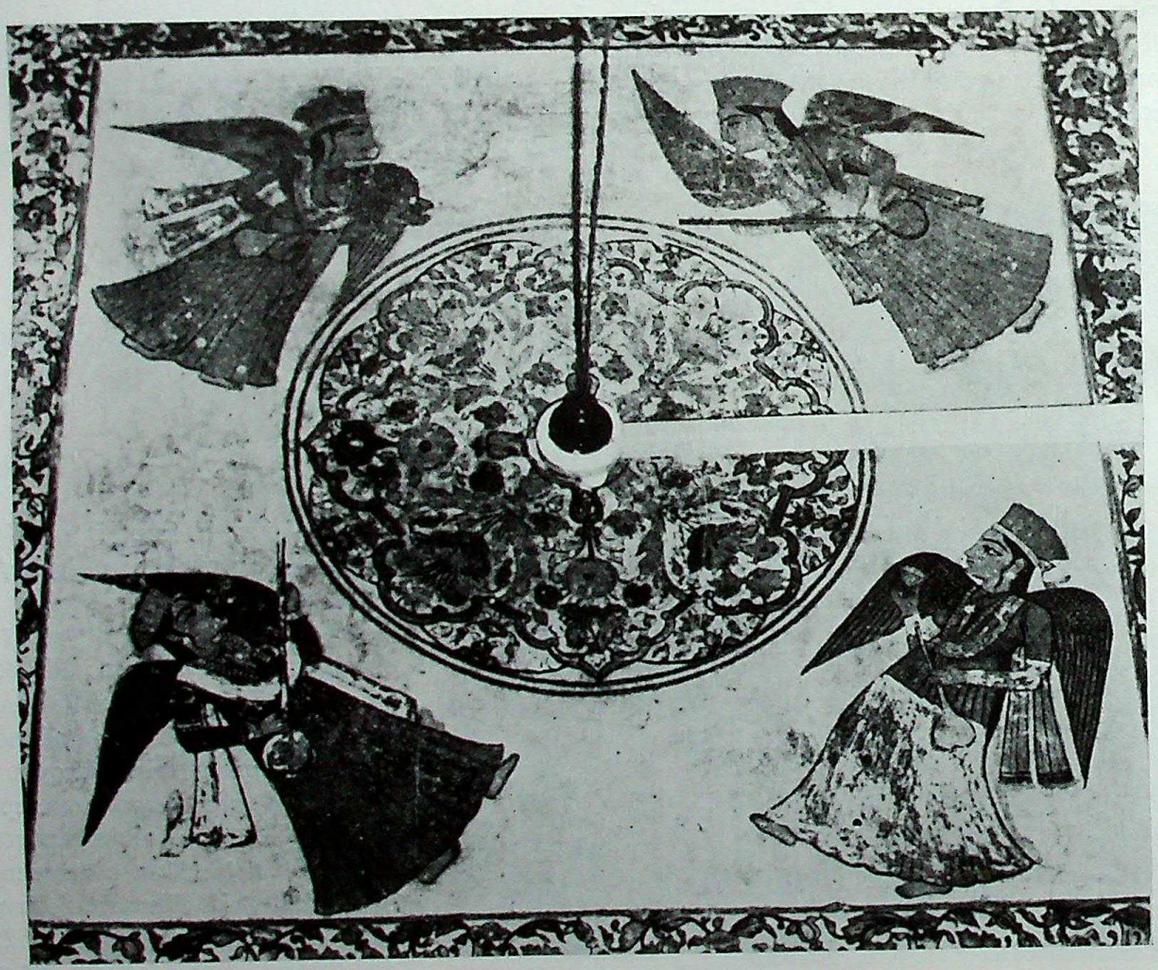

Fig. 43 *Pinḍorī Darbār—'Angels dressed in the Mughal fashion.'*

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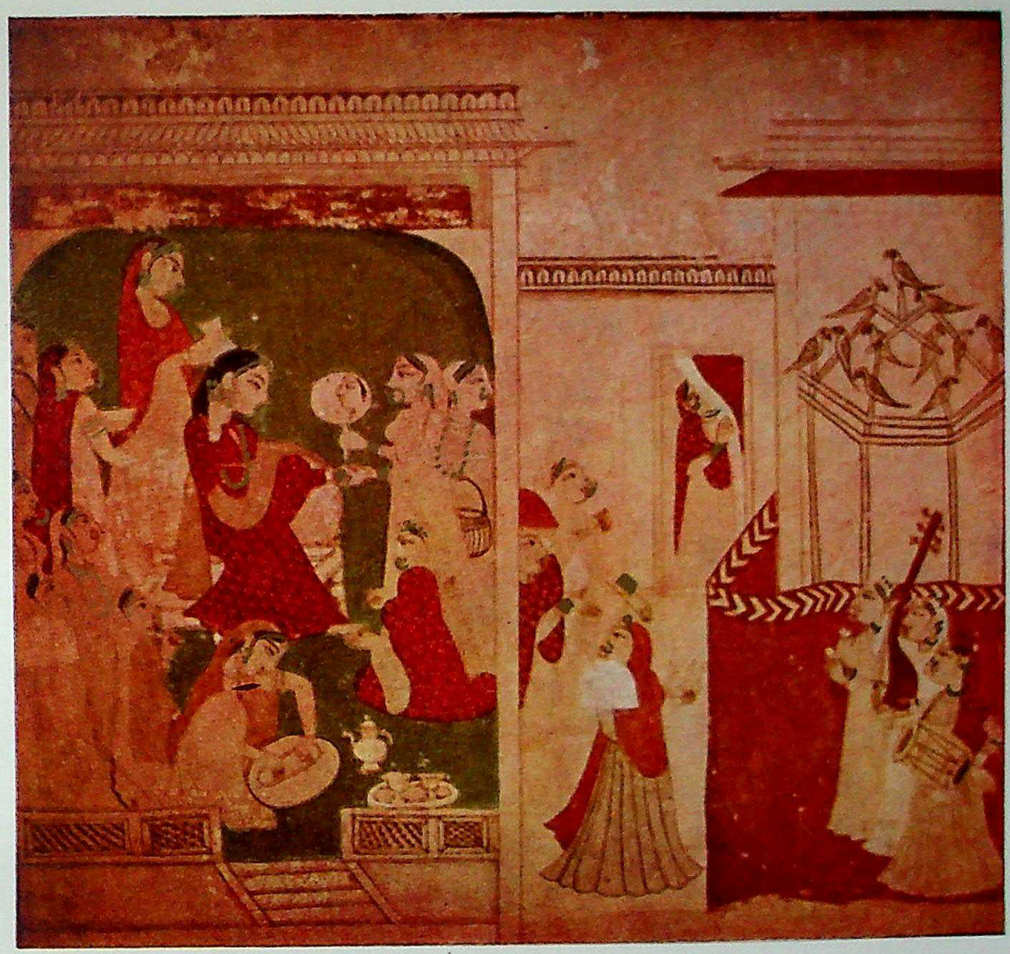

Plate XV

Darbār, Piṇḍorī

'Rukminī's Śṛṅgāra.'

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The original colour of the paintings seems to have been very rich as seen from the traces of maroon or *naswāri*, green, black and yellow which are still found on the walls of this temple. A smooth and finished effect is also fairly noticeable.

Pinḍorī, more than any other centre of wall paintings in the Western Himālayas, contains narrative panels. Most of these illustrate a sequence of legends from the life of Kṛṣṇa. A series of panels show his birth in prison; in others Vāsudeva is illustrated crossing the Yamunā carrying Kṛṣṇa on his head in a basket and placing the baby Kṛṣṇa on the bed of Yaśodā in Vṛndāvana. Finally Kaṁsa's men are seen slaying Yaśodā's daughter who is also depicted flying away (Fig. 13).

Kṛṣṇa's life in Vṛndāvana is painted in another set of panels. In one panel Pūtanā is seen suckling Kṛṣṇa. In another, Kṛṣṇa is seen fighting with the *rākshasas*. His sport with the *gopās* and *gopīs* is illustrated in a series of consecutive panels. Kṛṣṇa and the *gopās* stealing butter from the *gopīs* are painted in one panel. Rādhā dressed as a policeman apprehending Kṛṣṇa and his friends who had stolen butter, and his playing hide and seek are also shown. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enjoying themselves in a forest, or seated on a stool or standing under a single umbrella (Fig. 15) or just looking at each other (Fig. 44), are portrayed in all the enchanting colours of their romance.

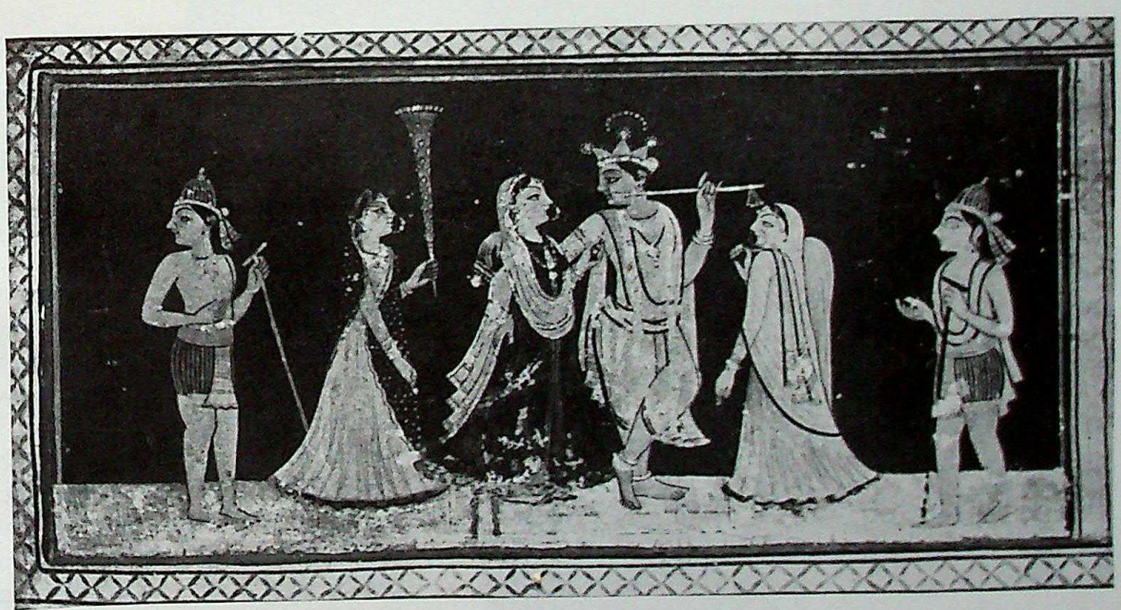

Fig. 44 *Pinḍorī Darbār—'Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.'*

A remarkable series of paintings illustrate Kṛṣṇa's marriage to Rukmiṇī. Kṛṣṇa's marriage procession with canopied and caparisoned elephants and his relatives mounted on horses or walking on foot, is depicted in a mood of great excitement in the first panel. In the second panel the procession has arrived at Rukmiṇī's house which is tastefully decorated to receive the guests (Plate XIV). There is an adjoining painting showing Rukmiṇī doing *Śṛṅgāra* for the occasion in

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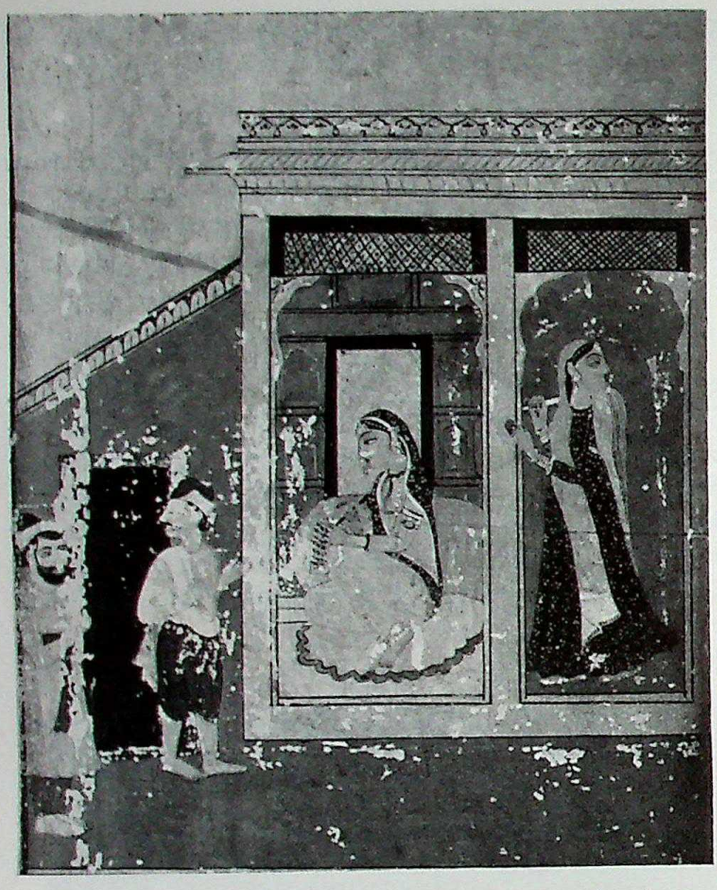

Fig. 45 *Piṇḍorī Darbār—'Rukminī receiving a message from Kṛṣṇa.'*

Fig. 46 *Piṇḍorī Darbār—'Kṛṣṇa in the Mahābhārata.'*

all her finery and ornaments with the help of her friends while one of the messengers is telling her of the arrival of the procession (Plate XV). The actual marrige ceremony is also illustrated in a especially set up *panḍāl* decorated with flowers and birds. The procession is also painted returning to Kṛṣṇa's home where he and his bride are welcomed (Plate XVI) and are lodged in separate rooms. There is finally a tender illustration of Kṛṣṇa sending a messenger to Rukminī informing her of his intention to visit her (Fig. 45). Kṛṣṇa proceeding to Mahābhārata (Plate XVII) and actually fighting (Fig. 46) are also illustrated here.

There are two panels from the Brahmā legend. In one Sarasvatī is painted approaching Brahmā with a book (Fig. 47) and in the other she is sitting on a swan, her customary vehicle, with a book in her hand. There is one panel depicting two women performing Gaṇeśapūjā (Fig. 48), and in another Śiva and Pārvatī are shown as seated in a forest. There are two illustrations of the Devī, one in which she is seated on a tiger by herself and in another, sitting on a stool with two elephants showering water on her. Viṣṇu reclining on the Śeṣanāga with Lakshmī pressing his feet is painted here as well.

There are two interesting secular paintings of unusual themes. In one of them a beautiful *rāṇī* is smoking a *hookāh* (Fig. 49). The other one on the left hand side of the ceiling of the temple is an

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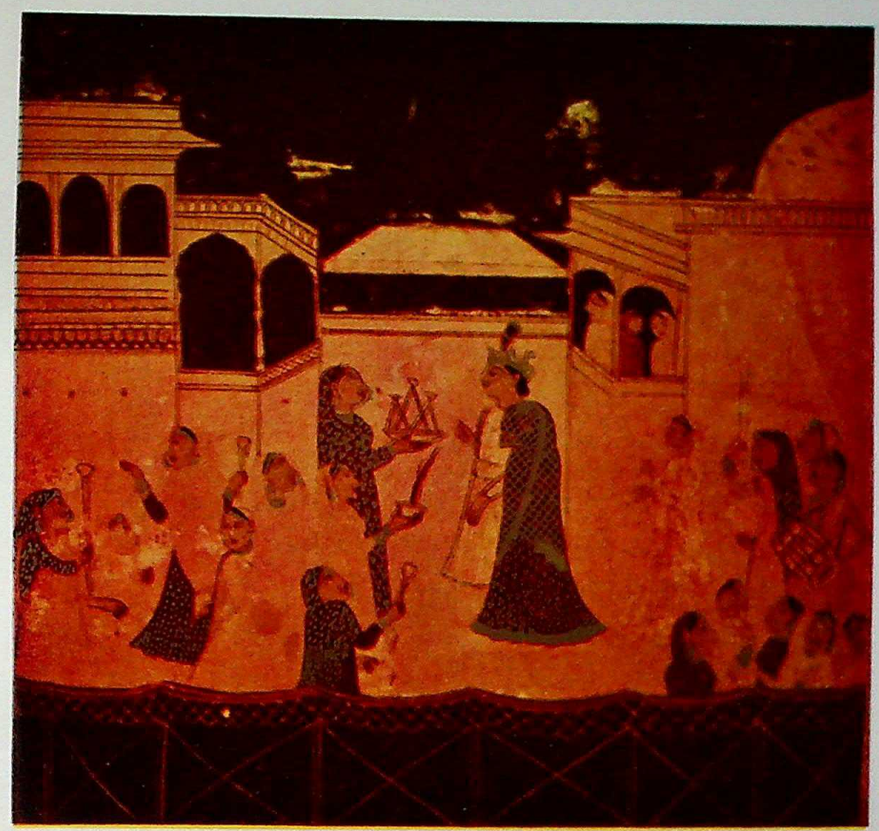

Plate XVI

Darbār, Piṇḍorī

'Rukminī and Kṛṣṇa being welcomed on their return to Mathurā after their wedding.

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Fig. 47 *Piṇḍorī Darbār—'Sarasvatī approaching Brahma.'*

Fig. 48 *Piṇḍorī Darbār—'Gaṇeśapūjā.'*

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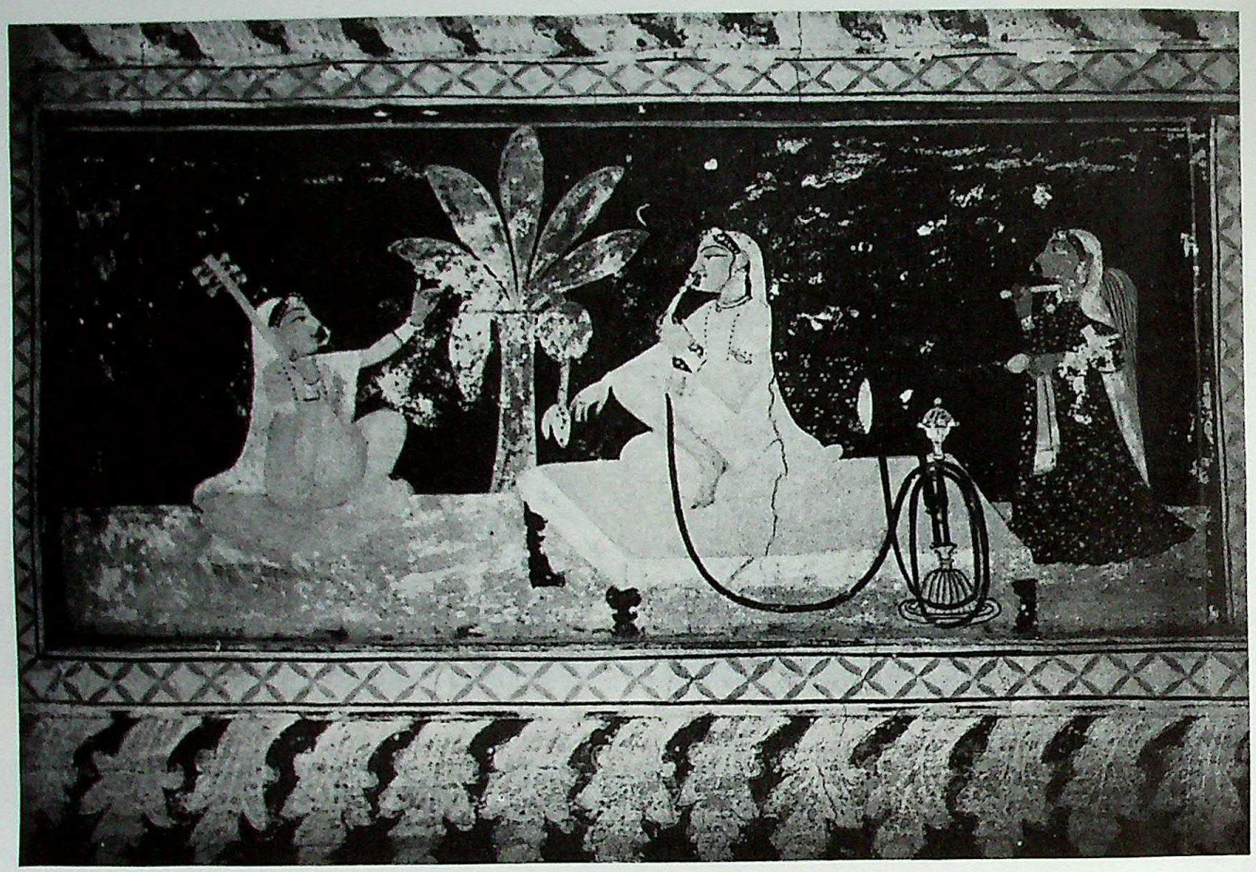

Fig. 49 *Pinḍorī Darbār*—'*A rāni smoking hookāh and listening to music.*'

illustration of two female angels wearing Muslim style clothes and caps, sporting wings and playing on stringed instruments (Fig. 43). It is a rather unusual theme as women in Muslim style dresses and of this nature are rarely to be seen in Pahāḍī wall paintings though there are one or two exceptions. The composition is executed in maroon, black and white colours with traces of green and blue.

Bābā Mahesh Dās kī Samādhī

This *samādhī* is found within the compound of the Pinḍorī Darbār, located 10 km. from Gurdāspur. Bābā Mahesh Dās was, according to local tradition, an associate of Bhagwānjī, the founder of the Pinḍorī Darbār. He is supposed to have refused to ascend the *gaddī* after Bhagwānjī, but nevertheless he is still venerated as a great saint. The architecture of this *samādhī* indicates that it must have been built in the last decade of the nineteenth century or the first decade of the twentieth. It is possible that when Mahesh Dās died, which should be about the middle of the seventeenth century, only a *samādhī* was constructed over him ; the present structure is relatively a modern one.

The *samādhī* contains illustrations which resemble, stylistically speaking, some of the later Rangmahal paintings of Chambā. The drawing is rather crude and the human figures are rela-

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Plate XVII

Darbār, Pindorī

'Kṛṣṇa proceeding to the Mahābhārata war.'

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Fig. 50 *Bābā Mahesh Dās kī Samādhī— 'Kṛṣṇa with the gopīs.'*

Fig. 51 *Bābā Mahesh Dās kī Samādhī— 'Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.'*

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tively short and stunted. The lines generally tend towards thickness. The colours used are also very limited, consisting mostly of maroon, green and yellow. These paintings were most probably executed by local artists.

There are two panels here which depict Kṛṣṇa playing with the *gopīs* (Fig. 50) and with Rādhā (Fig. 51). The bravery of Kṛṣṇa is illustrated in three scenes in which he is shown fighting with *rākshasas*. Viṣṇu in his *Narasiṁha* and *Matsya Avatāras* is also found illustrated here. Finally, there is a scene illustrating the *mahañtas* talking to each other.

Derā Bābā Nānak

This *Gurudvārā* was built, according to local tradition, after the death of Gurū Arjun Dev, which is purely conjectural since Gurū Arjun Dev was martyred in A.D. 1606. According to the *Gurdāspur District Gazetteer*[10], the Bedīs who claim descent from Gurū Nānak started its construction in A.D. 1765 with a grant of Rs 50,000 from Dīwan Nānak Baksh, Wazīr to the Nawāb of

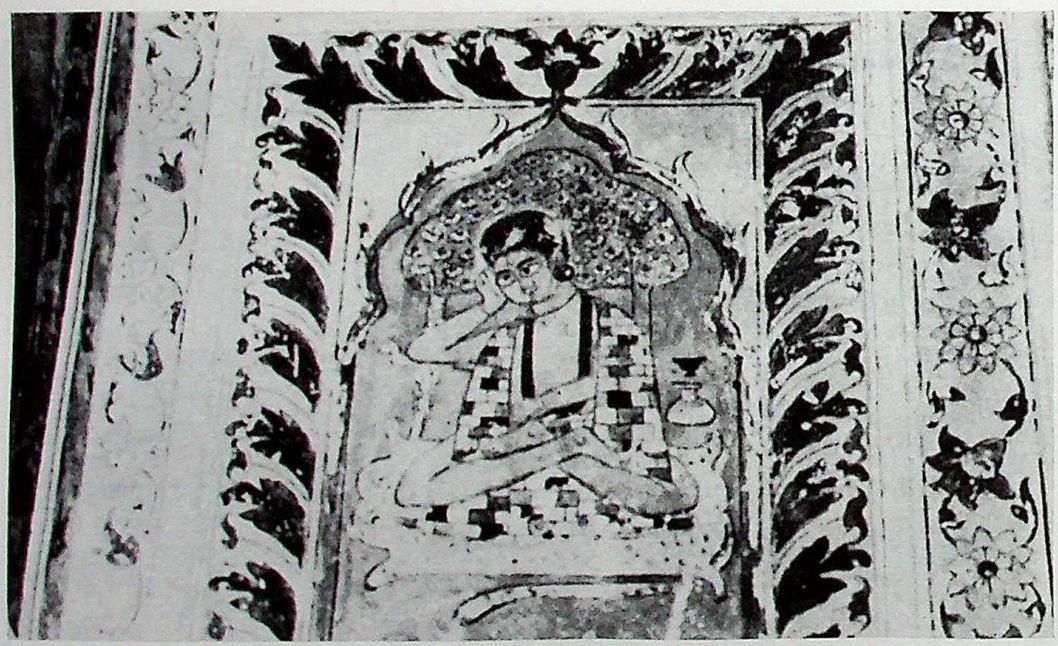

Fig. 52 *Derā Bābā Nānak—'Gurū Nānak as a young man meditating.'*

Hyderābād in the Deccan. Subsequently Rājā Chando Lāl also contributed towards its construction. In A.D. 1825 Mahārājā Ranjit Singh offered a large sum towards its completion and the temple was finished in A.D. 1827. The paintings on the walls of this *Gurudvārā* seem to have been executed subsequent to this date.

Stylistically, the paintings of Ḍerā Bābā Nānak are much nearer to the wall paintings of the Punjāb Himālayas than those of the first floor of Damtāl and of the *samādhī* of Bābā Mahesh Dās. The drawing is imaginative and there is a certain amount of grace in the delineation of the lines. The evident delight and feeling with which the common people and their day-to-day life have been rendered seem to indicate a relatively higher level of creativity. The colour scheme is, however, limited to the use of maroon, green, blue and yellow.

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Although a Sikh shrine, the choice of paintings displays the general eclecticism of the age. The themes represented include the Devī, the *Kāliyādamana* episode of Kṛṣṇa's life, Kṛṣṇa's dalliance with Rādhā and the *gopīs*, his playing the flute, and even Gaṇeśa who is shown on top of a painting of Gurū Nānak as a young man meditating under a tree (Fig. 52). A *sādhū* attended by his disciple and a four-armed angel and a panel depicting the nether world full of snakes are two of a few unusual themes which find their place here. Among the secular themes we have a charming princess who is attended by her *dāsīs*, and a farmer milking his cow which is gently licking her calf (Fig. 53).

Fig. 53 *Derā Bābā Nānak—'A farmer with his cow.'*

Kalānaur Masjid

Kalānaur is a small village in Gurdāspur district where Akbar was crowned Emperor. According to local tradition, however, it was built by a contemporary of Gurū Nānak. Architecturally speaking, it does not seem to have been built before the nineteenth century when the walls and ceilings too seem to have been painted over with vegetal and geometric designs.

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It has attractive panels with floral designs painted right from the floor to the ceiling. The ceiling is also covered with floral designs. The right and the left compartments on the two sides of the main place of prayer are painted in one design whereas in the central panel, in front of which prayers are offered, the drawings are mostly geometrical (Fig. 54); they are, however, different from the geometrical designs found in Hindu temples. The main colours employed are red, maroon, blue, green and yellow. They are similar to the colours used at the Piṇḍorī Darbār. We may, therefore, surmise that these panels were painted towards the middle of the nineteenth century. Further, although in consonance with Islamic injunctions the paintings do not portray any human figuration, it is nevertheless in the Pahāḍī tradition so far as the colour scheme and the floral designs are concerned.

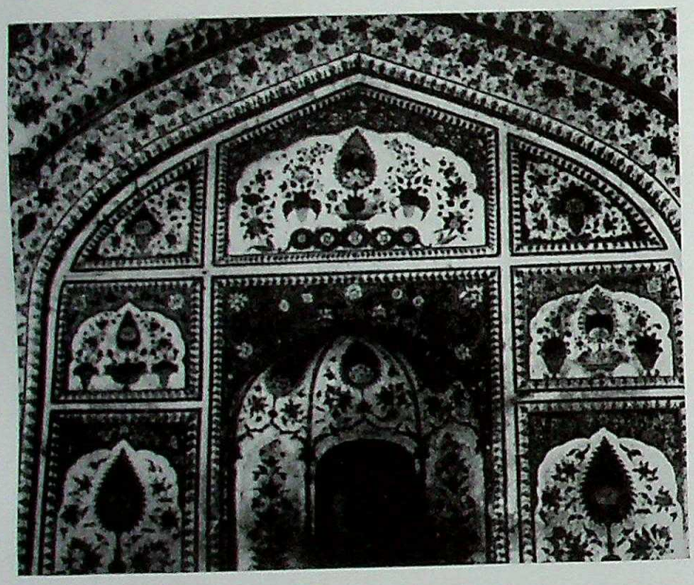

Fig. 54 *Kalānaur Masjid— 'Floral designs.'*

KULŪ DISTRICT

Devī Mural, Sultānpur Palace

The Rājā of Kulū had a palace at Sultānpur. There are paintings on the walls of this palace which were brought to light for the first time in A.D. 1953 by Dr. M. S. Randhāwā. They were executed under the patronage of Rājā Prītam Singh (A.D. 1776-1806) a contemporary of Rājā Sansār Chand. There is a view that they were painted by Sajnū who was originally employed by Rājā Sansār Chand[11]. On stylistic grounds, however, this assumption appears to be incorrect, as the style of the drawing as well as colouring revealed in the miniatures by Sajnū are quite different from those of the Devī mural of Kulū. There is a painting in miniature of a lady giving water to a traveller (Fig. 55) which was painted by Sajnū and bears the following inscription :

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Plate XVIII

Sultānpur Palace, Kulū

'Homage to Tripurāsundarī Devī.'

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"Vikramaditya Saṁvat 1865
Desī Saṁvat 64, Jeṭh Śrī Mahārājā
Iśwarī Singhji dī Farmāyaśi Māfak
Likhe Chitrahru Sajnū."

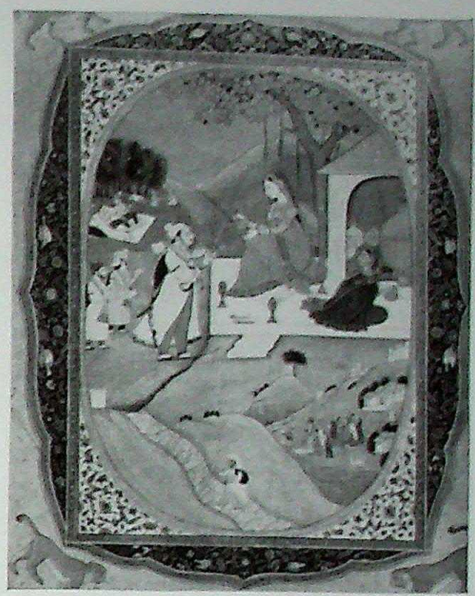

Fig. 55 *Kulū Miniature—'A lady giving water to a traveller.'*

It was painted by Sajnū, at the request of Iśwarī Singh in Vikrama Saṁvat 1865 (= A.D. 1808). A comparison of this painting with whatever still remains of the Kulū Devī mural would reveal differences in the facial types and in the drawing of the eyes. It also shows the contrast between the gracefulness and fluidity in the lines of the miniature and the comparative stylisation of the animals and the different type of human figures in the wall painting. Moreover, the miniature is the production of a highly sophisticated artist working in the true Kāngrā tradition of Rājā Sansār Chand's court, whereas the Devī mural shows that it was the product of an artist deeply involved in the local environs and art forms of Kulū. It seems to have been executed after A.D. 1806, the date commonly given to the wall paintings of the Narmadeśvara temple at Sujānpur Tīrā, since the drawing as well as the colouring are slightly inferior in quality in the case of the Devī mural of Kulū as compared to the paintings of the Narmadeśvara panels.

The Devī mural of Kulū has now been shifted to the National Museum, New Delhi. It is a big panel (3.78 m × 2.26 m) and covers the entire wall from the ground to the ceiling and represents the goddess Tripurāsundarī, an aspect of Durgā or the Devī (Plate XVIII). The theme relates itself to the three worlds—*svarga*, *martya* and *pātāla*—paying homage to the goddess who was the most beautiful in all the three worlds. In order to illustrate this the artist tried to create a universe in motion with entire humanity coming to the palace of the Devī or getting ready to do so, or just meditating on her or singing her praise. In this painting are found the common people on foot, princes and princesses in their chariots, female and male soldiers (Plate XIX), other gods and goddesses in their chariots along with their devotees, all proceeding in crowds to the palace of Tripurāsundarī (Plate XX). Elephants, horses, deer etc. are also seen in this crowd. The primacy of the Devī in this temple is sought to be shown in other ways as well. In one of the panels her consort, Śiva, is represented as performing the *Tāṅḍava* dance while she sits at the top of the panel on a lotus pedestal. In another panel Brahmā, the creator of the three worlds, is shown in attendance with a book in his hands. The central panel of this enormous mural is occupied by the Devī presented in a well-knit and effective composition. At the four corners of the panel are presented four palaces painted in white and sheltering in each of them a seated figure of the Devī who is being attended upon by female *chaurī*-bearers or surrounded by female devotees. There is also a palace in the centre in which a five-headed Devī is seated on the body of a prostrate Śiva. In front of her the heavy, rounded and obese form of a *rājā* stands with folded hands wearing a turban and an *achkan* (long coat), very similar to the *achkans* in contem-

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porary use (Fig. 56). This figure evidently represents the donor or patron of the painting or the temple or of both. Behind the Devī stands an old grey-haired queen with a crown on her head in front of whom stand two young princesses, again with crowns on their heads. Below the Devī's throne or *chaukī*, the ground is painted in maroon colour and *devīs* and *devatās* are sitting in

Fig. 56 *Kulū, Sultānpur Palace—'The central panel showing a rājā paying homage to the Devī.'*

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Plate XIX

Sultānpur Palace, Kulū

'Devotees of Tripurāsundarī proceeding to her palace.'

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Plate XX

Sultānpur Palace, Kulū

'*Devatās* and kings proceeding to pay homage to Tripurāsundarī Devī.'

Plate XXa

Sultānpur Palace, Kulū

'A detail from Plate XX.'

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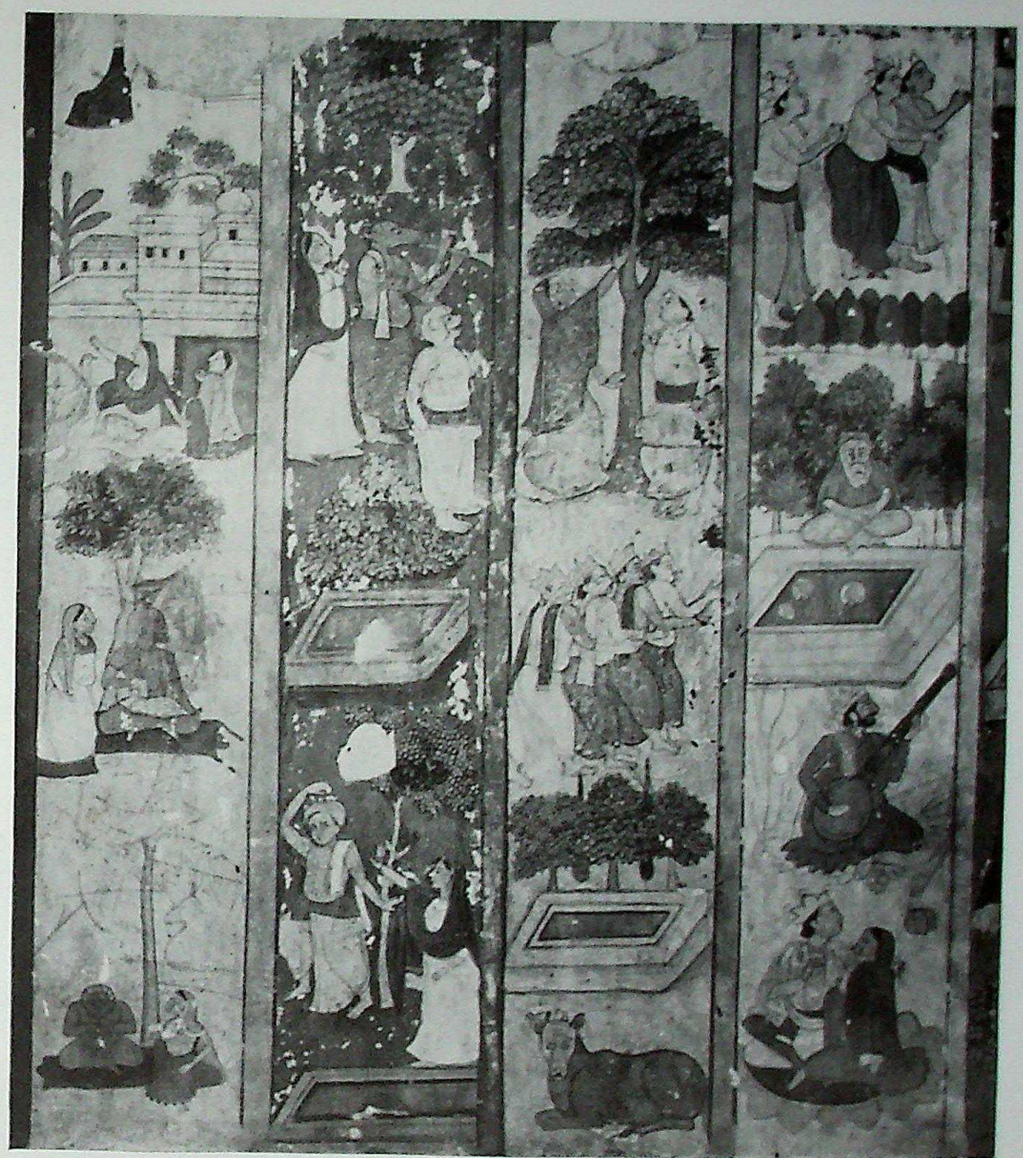

Fig. 57 *Sultānpur Palace, Kulū—'Common people engaged in mundane pursuits.'*

worshipful positions. On the left hand side are seen many princesses and their retinue of women, all decked in attractive clothes. All around the central panel are seen the devotees of the Devī.

What is interesting to note is that even in this crowded world of the nobility and the aristocracy, the artist made use in his composition of the common people and their daily round of life (Fig. 57). They are presented in the context of their lowly environs, sometime talking to *sādhūs* and taking their advice, at others going about their other normal day-to-day pursuits like tending cows. There is a remarkable painting of a lady just sitting in her house and evidently gossiping with her friends (Plate XXI). Scholars both male and female are shown reading from manuscripts and reciting *mañtras* from them. The *sādhūs* were accepted as normal human

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beings forming a segment of society, and were not considered as any special group or class that demanded any special attention; in the paintings they are not extended any unusual veneration. The artists have shown them on river banks or in huts or under trees seated in meditation. They are also depicted in ordinary human pursuits like washing their clothes after a bath or warming themselves in front of a fire (Fig. 3). *Yoginīs* or women *yogīs* have also been painted. The artists of the Devī mural have taken a great deal of interest in presenting their thematic content in the context of nature. But while they presented vegetal nature and the world of animals in a somewhat naturalistic manner, flowing water like streams and rivers and hills were shown very conventionally (Plate XXII).

Considerable attention has been given to the drawing of architectural details. The huts of the common people, the houses of the relatively rich and the palaces of the Devī have all been painted with attention to detail. The huts of the poor, for instance, are painted in mustard and brown to give the effect of straw, the larger houses in red and white to produce the effect of sandstone and marble. The palaces of the Devī are provided with columns, turrets and towers which were so common in Rājasthānī palaces. There is one interesting technical point to note in this painting, namely, the use of the design of cubes within cubes, evidently to create the illusion of depth.

Compositionally speaking, the mural has been divided into horizontal and vertical subdivisions, their backgrounds being painted in a variety of colours, namely, dark grey, slate grey, royal blue, navy blue, almond colour, pale green, bottle green, maroon, orange and red. The coloured backgrounds also act as smooth bases for the compositions painted on them. For example, when the background is green, the dress of the Devī in the foreground is in red (Plate XXII); when the background is in blue, yellow and orange predominate in the foreground. When small self-contained cameos are painted on the background, the effect is one of total harmony as seen in a painting of a woman sitting in her house (Plate XXI). The strips of different backgrounds blend harmoniously with each other. The colours used in the Devī mural do not, however, have the translucent finish of the Shogī or the Narmadeśvara temple murals at Sujānpur Tīrā; nevertheless the colours used have been given in their rendering a quality of vigour and vitality.

Sultānpur Palace

The Devī mural was painted in the verandah of the Sultānpur palace. On the walls of an adjoining room there are other panels said to have been painted by an artist known as Bhagwān. One of these paintings contains an interesting illustration of the marriage of Rāma and Sītā. The whole scene is laid within voussoir arches resting on pillars on both sides. Sītā garlanding Rāma in the presence of Daśaratha and Janaka is quite clearly visible. Another small panel illustrates the theme of *Rukminīharaṇa*.

The wall to the right seems to have been given altogether to the well-known Vaiṣṇava theme called *Nāyikābheda*. At various places on the wall the following *nāyikās* have been painted: *Abhisandhitā*, *Khaṇḍitā*, *Utkā*, *Abhisārikā*, *Svādhinapatikā*, *Vipralabdhā*, *Proṣitapatikā* and *Vāsakasajjā*.

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Plate XXI

Sultānpur Palace, Kulū

'An aristocratic lady in her home.'

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Plate XXII

Sultānpur Palace, Kulū

'Devotees proceeding to pay homage to Tripurāsundarī Devī.'

Plate XXIIa

Sultānpur Palace, Kulū

'A detail from Plate XXII illustrating female devotees.'

Plate XXIIb (extreme right)

Sultānpur Palace, Kulū

'A detail from Plate XXII illustrating the river Beās.'

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Rājā Vikrama Singh is also shown in three of these panels, riding with his standard-bearers or riding with musicians in front of him and finally riding to the battle field.

CHAMBĀ DISTRICT

Devī-rī-Kothī

In Chambā there are two centres of wall paintings. What appear to be the older ones are found in the temple of Devī-rī-Koṭhī. There is an inscription on this temple which when translated runs as follows :

> "In the year 30 (the month of) Bhādro 21, on that date the illustrious Mahārājā Umed Singh has built the temple of goddess Chamundā. The Superintendent (Sardār) of the temple, the illustrious Miān Bishan Singh; the Sewādārs, Ghamyan, Nilheri and Jhagrū of Sungal; the carpenters, Gurdev and Jhandā, the stone masons, Debū of Halī and the Chela (?) Dyāl. Written on 29th of R. Poh. Bliss."

It is possible that this temple may have been constructed by Rājā Umed Singh in A.D. 1754, but it is very unlikely that the paintings were also executed under the patronage of this *rājā*. It would be more correct to place them, on stylistic grounds, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The temple is dedicated to the Devī and contains illustrations of the exploits of the goddess Durgā. But there are many panels given to themes taken from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Three panels illustrate Kṛṣṇa and the *gopās* playing with the *gopīs* (Fig. 58), a *gopī*

Fig. 58 *Chambā, Devī-rī-Koṭhi—'Kṛṣṇa and the gopās playing with the gopīs.'*

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Fig. 59 *Chambā, Devī-rī-Koṭhī—'A gopī in front of a cooking fire.'*

Fig. 60 *Chambā, Devī-rī-Koṭhī—'A lady taking water from a tap.'*

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Plate XXIII

Rangmahal, Chambā

'Yaśodā with Kṛṣṇa.'

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standing by a fire on which something is being cooked (Fig. 59) and a lady taking water from a tap (Fig. 60). Nothing is known about the artist of these paintings, but some of the mannerisms, namely, the large eyes and the angularity of the lines, remind one of the miniatures of the Basholī school. It, therefore, seems likely that these murals were executed earlier than the murals of the Rangmahal at Chambā. The drawing in the Devī-rī-Koṭhī mural found in the Kāngrā complex of paintings is quite different from the drawing of the Kāngrā complex of paintings associated with Rājā Sansār Chand.

Rangmahal

The construction of the Rangmahal palace was begun by Rājā Umed Singh[12] (A.D. 1748-64) who had once been a prisoner of the Mughals for thirteen years and had married a princess from Basholī. Architecturally, the palace appears to be late Mughal in style, although additions and alterations seem to have been made to it right up to the middle of the nineteenth century, first by Jīt Singh (A.D. 1794-1804) and then by Charat Singh (A.D. 1808-44). The Rangmahal was used as a residence for the women of the *rājās* of Chambā as late as up to A.D. 1947. The paintings which have been brought to the National Museum, New Delhi, appear to be the product of mid-nineteenth century, executed probably in the reigns of Rājā Charat Singh (A.D. 1808-44) and Rājā Śiva Singh (A.D. 1844-70); a few panels may be still later in date. The assumption that the paintings do not all belong chronologically to the same region is further reinforced by the fact that some of them were done in layers upon layers; photo-micrographs have made this point very clear.

The names of the artists responsible for these paintings are unknown except for one who was known as Durgā. As the quality of the drawings and paintings is not uniformally of a high standard it follows perhaps that these panels must have been executed by a number of artists with varying degrees of skill.

The Rangmahal palace contains, after the Narmadeśvara temple, Sujānpur Tīrā, the largest collection of existing wall paintings in the hills. Most of the themes illustrated are religious in character and show the religious eclecticism of the times. The legends of Kṛṣṇa, Rāma and Śiva are thus all narrated side by side.

The romance of Kṛṣṇa's life seems to have enjoyed an irresistible appeal here as elsewhere in the hills. A considerable number of panels are illustrated with such themes as infant Kṛṣṇa playing with Yaśodā, Nanda and Balarāma and being patted by her (Plate XXIII), Kṛṣṇa's life as a cowherd in Vṛndāvana, his romance with Rādhā and dalliance with the *gopīs*, his playing Holī with them and stealing their clothes (Plate XXIV). Kṛṣṇa as the protector of Vṛndāvana in his *Govardhanadhāraṇa* role is also illustrated in fine, harmonious colours (Plate XXV); *Gopīs* bathing in a village stream amidst a beautiful forest and a half dark and half white faced Kṛṣṇa being saluted by the *gopīs* are also painted with loving care. In the love scenes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, great attention is given to detail; they are depicted standing in a forest under an umbrella, looking enraptured at each other; and in many other environs (Plate XXVI). Their love is also echoed by nature which is painted in the bright colours of spring and symbolised by entwining creepers and relaxed cows (Plate XXVII). Rādhā dressed as a man apprehending Kṛṣṇa for stealing butter from the *gopīs*, or more sophisticated themes like looking at each other while a *gopī* holds up a mirror (Fig. 15), or the couple gazing distantly from a balcony, all find articulation in many a panel.

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Rādhā as a *māninī nāyikā* with Kṛṣṇa placating her, and doing her *śṛṅgāra* by combing her hair are other interesting themes painted by the artists (Fig. 8).

There is only one panel illustrating an enthroned Rāma and Sītā with Lakshmaṇa and Hanumāna standing in front of them with folded hands (Plate XXVIII). This illustration perhaps represents the coronation of Rāma and Sītā after their return to Ayodhyā.

Compositions of Viṣṇu reclining on the *Śeṣanāga* while Lakshmī is pressing his feet, Viṣṇu standing with Brahmā and Śiva and in his *Narasiṁha Avatāra* form killing Hiraṇyakaśipu, the father of Prahlāda.

Śiva is portrayed in those stories alone where he has to appear along with his wife Pārvatī. The biggest panel at Rangmahal shows him seated with Pārvatī, Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya and their mounts, under a big tree in a forest (Plate XXIX). This composition is repeated in a few other panels. He is also shown riding with Pārvatī and their two children in a forest. In an unusual composition he is illustrated playing his *ḍamaru* (drum) while his disciples are dancing. In a very interesting picture Śiva is shown in deep meditation while dancing girls are exerting their utmost attraction to break Śiva's concentration. Even a Śiva with five heads is illustrated here. The worship of *Śiva Liñga* is also illustrated (Plate XXX).

As in most other centres of Pahāḍī wall paintings, the Devī finds herself portrayed here too in more than one form. She is shown setting forth on her mount, the tiger, to fight her enemies, or just sitting on a pedestal or lotus seat and receiving the homage of her devotees. There is also a scene illustrating Viṣṇu, Śiva and Brahmā and three other devotees standing in salutation to her. These panels are compositionally simple and the drawing and colour are direct and unsophisticated.

A few illustrations of Gaṇeśa are also noticed, but these are without any distinction.

Four of the best paintings found in the Rangmahal panels illustrate secular themes. Among them there is a charming picture of two girls on a swing while a third girl is pushing it (Plate XXXI). The drawing is effective and depicts the movements of the swing in a refined manner against a simple background. The dark red, green, blue and brown used in painting this panel lend a delightful charm to this painting. In a second panel two princesses with children on their laps are shown playing *chaupār*. Although the *rāṇīs* are beautifully drawn, the figures of their children are disproportionate to their own size. A tender panel illustrates a *nāyikā* writing a letter to her lover while her *dāsī* (maid) is keeping a watch to see that no one enters the room to know the secrets of her mistress's heart. A fourth panel on the side of a door leading to one of the rooms of the Rangmahal palace is the figure of a very attractive woman drawn and painted in the Rājasthānī fashion. She is portrayed wearing jewels and a bright red dress with a yellow *oḍhaṇi*. There is besides an illustration of *Ṭoḍī Rāginī* with a *nāyikā* playing on a stringed instrument with a deer listening to her.

The quality of drawing in these paintings does not maintain a uniformally good standard. In some of the panels, for example 'Girls on a swing' (Plate XXXI), the drawing is of a high standard of excellence, but in others as in 'Kṛṣṇa playing Holī with the *gopīs*,' it lacks in firmness. It may be due to the fact that the later panels were executed by artists of lesser calibre. Rājasthānī influence in drawing is quite marked as seen in the general angularity of the line, the shape of the eyes, the styles of hair, jewellery and the pointed lines of the dresses of the human figures.

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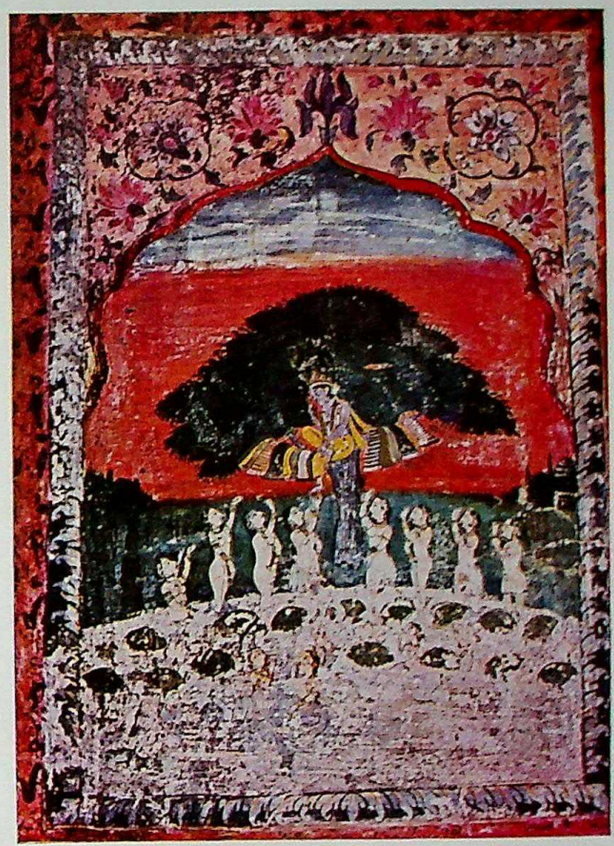

Plate XXIV

Rangmahal, Chambā

'Gopī Vastraharaṇa.'

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A chemical analysis of the colours of the Rangmahal paintings by Dr. Gairolā of the National Museum, New Delhi,[13] indicates that the most favourite colours here were red ochre, yellow ochre, and blue made both out of ultramarine and indigo. Four panels containing green colour were analysed, out of which three turned out to be malacite and the fourth, criscola or green earth, black made out of carbon and white out of chalk as well as clay. Green in its various shades is the most popolar colour—trees, grass lands and undulating hills are all painted in a wide variety of shades of green. Orange and yellow are not used for landscaping but primarily for painting the dresses of female figures.

These paintings indicate three or four different styles in the use of colour which is perhaps attributable to the employment of artists of varying skills and attitudes. The colours used in one set of the paintings are very dark and sober like bottle green with a touch of orange, for example, in the panel depicting Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the forest (Plate XXVII). In some of the panels the colour scheme is very simple; the Devī painting, for instance, shows the use of yellow and maroon alone. A third set of paintings, of Yaśodā and Kṛṣṇa (Plate XXIII) and of two girls on a swing (Plate XXXI) for example, has a rich variety of colours arranged in a harmonious scheme. Finally, we have paintings showing Śiva and Pārvatī in the forest (Plate XXI) and the *Vastra-haraṇa* theme for instance, where the colouring was done in such a weak fashion that their tones have all but already faded (Plate XXVII). On the whole, however, the application of colours is bright and harmonious but does not have the smoothness or translucence of the Narmadeśvara paintings or the elegance of Shogī.

MAÑDĪ DISTRICT

Mañḍī which is quite near Kāngrā must have been an important centre of wall paintings. According to Vigne who visited the palace of Rājā Balbīr Singh (crowned A.D. 1830), there were paintings on the walls of his palace. He writes :

> "I derived some amusement from the inspection of new paintings on the walls and of these one in particular attracted my attention.....In the centre of the celestial city of mixed Hindu and Saracenic architecture, was a courtyard surrounded by a plain octagonal wall; its circumference such as the perspective could not have exceeded one hundred yards. Kālī sat in the centre and there was also Kailāśa[14]."

The paintings of the *rājā's* palace have been completely damaged and no traces of them now exist. The only paintings now left in Mañḍī are in the house of Miān Bhāg Singh who was the minister of the last *rājā's* grandfather. Om Chand Hāṇḍā who has written on Pahāḍī paintings, thinks that they were painted between A.D. 1839-1846[15]. There is more than one local tradition about the authorship of these paintings. According to one tradition, these paintings were executed by a Muslim artist called Mohammadī who might have perhaps come from the court of Rājā Sansār Chand. Another source attributes these paintings to Ghaiyā Narotam who was one of the best painters of Mañḍī[16]. There is also a belief that Sajnū, one of the important painters of Sansār Chand's court, migrated to Mañḍī and was presumably responsible for these paintings. The paintings are rather conventional and stiff and their drawing is weak. It is therefore unlikely that a sophisticated artist of Sansār Chand's court could have executed them.

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The largest panel in Miān Bhāg Singh's *havelī* gives a panoramic view of life in Mañḍī. There are illustrations here of the *rājā's* court, with elephants, servants and women-folk all grouped together. Another panel shows the *rājā's* infantry and cavalry formations. Groups of courtiers and musicians as well as common people and *sādhūs* are also found in these paintings.

An interesting panel illustrates Kṛṣṇa seated on a tree (Fig. 61) with the stolen clothes of the *gopīs* who look abashed and ashamed without them (Fig. 2). The drawing of the Mañḍī wall paintings is rather wooden and imitative and is not of the best Pahāḍī style. Most of the colours used in these paintings have faded with only shades of green, black and maroon still evident.

Fig. 61 *Mañḍi, Miān Bhāg Singh's Havelī— 'Kṛṣṇa seated on a tree.'*

MAHĀSŪ DISTRICT

Arkī

Here paintings have been done on the walls of the ancestral home of the *rājās* of Arkī. The former *rājā*, Shri Rājendra Singh, stated in a personal interview[17] that the construction of the palace was first started by Rājā Mehar Chand (A.D. 1670-1727) and was built upon again by Rājā Kṛṣan Chand (A.D. 1838-1876) who also commissioned the paintings. Rājā Kṛṣan Chand is believed to have sided with the British during the revolt of A.D. 1857, and had a long reign. It is, therefore, likely that the paintings were made after the revolt during which he came in close contact with the British and can hence be dated to approximately between A.D. 1860-76. This is evident from a number of scenes representing British civilian and military groups interspersed with other themes. Further, the paintings show a knowledge of European prints which present scenes of almost of all the major ports of the world. There is no proof that any of the Arkī *rājās* or artists ever went abroad, it is, therefore, likely that these paintings were copied, rather very indifferently, from European prints acquired from the markets in the plains or from British individuals. To the hill *rājās* they were interesting curios, without doubt.

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Plate XXV

Rangmahal, Chambā

'Govardhanadhāraṇa.'

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According to Shri Rājendra Singh, the palace was constructed by an architect from Rājasthān but he was not able to tell anything as to the artist of the paintings. According to one source[18], an artist by the name of Hastū, was responsible for them. There is no evidence to support this, because Hastū merely means one who works with his hands. It is quite likely that the artists were of local origin. Arkī lay on the main route from Simlā to Kāngrā and had important cultural relations with the hill states of the Kāngrā district. During the early part of the nineteenth century, it also had close political contact with them which is proved by the fact that when Amar Singh Thāpā, the Gorkhā General, invaded the hills in A.D. 1806, he made the palace of Arkī his capital. The *rājā* of Arkī also gave refuge to Sansār Chand's son who fled from the Sikhs. It is not, therefore, unlikely that the artists of Arkī may have belonged to Kāngrā.

All the paintings in the Arkī palace are found in the *Dīwān Khānā*, where the *rājā* used to sit with his nobles for transacting the business of the state. The artist or artists divided the whole hall into eighteen different compartments, each containing two to three panels of paintings. Famous episodes from the Rāmāyana, the *Bhāgavata* and the Mahābhārata and scenes depicting Śiva and Pārvatī with Gaṇeśa and the *siddhas* are found painted here. The artist has paid no consideration to continuity in the narration of themes and has arranged various diverse themes without any regard to their inter-relation. Thus, religious myths and legends have been placed side by side with the scenes of cities and ports of the world, European civilians and British army formations on march.

What is, however, somewhat refreshing are the representations of certain purely secular scenes illustrating the life of the common people. One panel of painting captures the considerable excitement and gaiety of a group of villagers, of all ages, watching at a rural circus, particularly the antics of a woman walking on ropes (Fig. 5). On the top of this, a vivid panel shows a group of Gaddīs travelling along with their cattle. There is also a panel illustrating two young wrestlers engaged in combat.

Two *rāṇīs* going out for hunting, riding horses which are made up of human figures joined together, and a *rājā* similarly riding out to a hunt with his courtiers are subject matters of two other panels. There is a beautiful panel illustrating the season of spring showing flowers blooming in a forest of colour. A painting of a forest showing various animals co-existing peacefully is an unusual theme found here and repeated nowhere else in the hills of the Western Himālayas.

The drawing of the Arkī wall paintings is not uniformly effective. In a few panels, like the circus scene, for instance (Fig. 5), it is quite adequate and effective whereas in others the line tends to be weak and flat. The colours used in these paintings have mostly faded; those that still exist are in dark shades of bottle green, rust, mustard and blue.

AMBĀLĀ DISTRICT

Temple of Mansā Devī at Maṇī Mājrā

The shrine of Mansā Devī at Maṇī Mājrā lies about 10 km. from Chandīgarh. Maṇī Mājrā formed an independent principality during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries and

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had feuds with its neighbours, the states of Sirmūr and Paṭiālā. There is an inscription in one of the galleries of this temple which can be translated as follows :

> "This Chaṇḍi (was) painted by Aṅgad in Saṁvat 1870 (A.D. 1813) in the bright half of the month of Chaitra (March)."

Dr. B. N. Goswāmī[19] thinks that this Aṅgad must have come from Sirmūr because at this time Sirmūr was in a state of great confusion. Rājā Saran Parkaś[20] was forced by the British to abdicate because of incompetence. At this time Maṇī Mājrā was being ruled by Gopāl Singh, a chief of great zeal and ability, who did excellent service for the British in A.D. 1809-1814. This combination of circumstances must have led Aṅgad to Maṇī Mājrā. In Dr. Goswāmī's opinion, these paintings must have been executed by A.D. 1816 at the latest. This hypothesis seems to be somewhat conjectural. First, there is no evidence to indicate that all the paintings of the Maṇī Mājrā temple were painted by the same artist who was known as Aṅgad. The figures are short and squat and the drawing is of a quality which is inferior to the general run of Pahāḍī murals of this time. Secondly, the architectural designs in these paintings do not have any proportion, although Pahāḍī artists as a rule took great interest in drawing architectural details as accurately as possible. It would thus be quite safe to assume that these paintings were done in the later half of the nineteenth century.

The drawing of the Mansā Devī temple is not of a high standard. In fact some of the drawings are as crude as those of the paintings found in the *samādhī* of Bābā Mahesh Dās in the compound of the Piṇḍorī Darbār. The colour application is also of a poor quality. The artist does not appear to have used fast colours, as a result of which the colours of one painting seem to have seeped into the adjoining paintings. Moreover, in many places the colours have faded. There is also not much variety in the number of colours used; traces of bottle green, black and orange alone are found.

A great variety of themes are found illustrated in the Maṇī Mājrā temple. The main temple contains thirty-eight panels; besides there are floral designs painted all over the ceiling and on the arches leading into the temple. The Devī, to whom the temple is dedicated, has naturally the pride of place. One of the panels illustrates Brahmāsura *rākshasa* stealing the bangles of Pārvatī and then returning them at the intervention of Śiva. The marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī is also depicted in a series of paintings. There are many panels showing Devī riding on her *vāhana*, the tiger, receiving homage from Śiva, Viṣṇu and other *devatās* (Fig. 62) or just seated on her throne. Although, there is no separate panel given to Śiva as he is invariably painted along with the Devī, there is, however, a very peculiar panel which shows Śiva riding a dog. In a few panels here the children of Śiva and Pārvatī, Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya, are also presented.

Kṛṣṇa, the most popular hero of the Pahāḍī artists, could not certainly be forgotten or ignored. There are illustrations of Kṛṣṇa as a child sitting with his brother Balarāma and parents, Nanda and Yośodā, his romantic dalliance with the *gopīs* including the *Vastraharaṇa* theme, the episode of the *Govardhanadhāraṇa*, his residence at Dwārka (Fig. 63), and his friendship with Sudāmā. The Rāmāyaṇa themes represented here include Rāma's visit to Janaka's court, Sītā's *svayaṁvara*, the wedding of Rāma and Sītā, Rāma and Lakshmaṇa going to war in a chariot, Ayodhyā looking desolate after the exile of Rāma, Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmaṇa crossing the river to enter a forest as a prelude to their exile, the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa and the killing of

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Mārichi by Rāma. An interesting panel exhibits a deity by the name of Ee (Fig. 20) who seems to follow the iconographic pattern followed in illustrating Durgā.

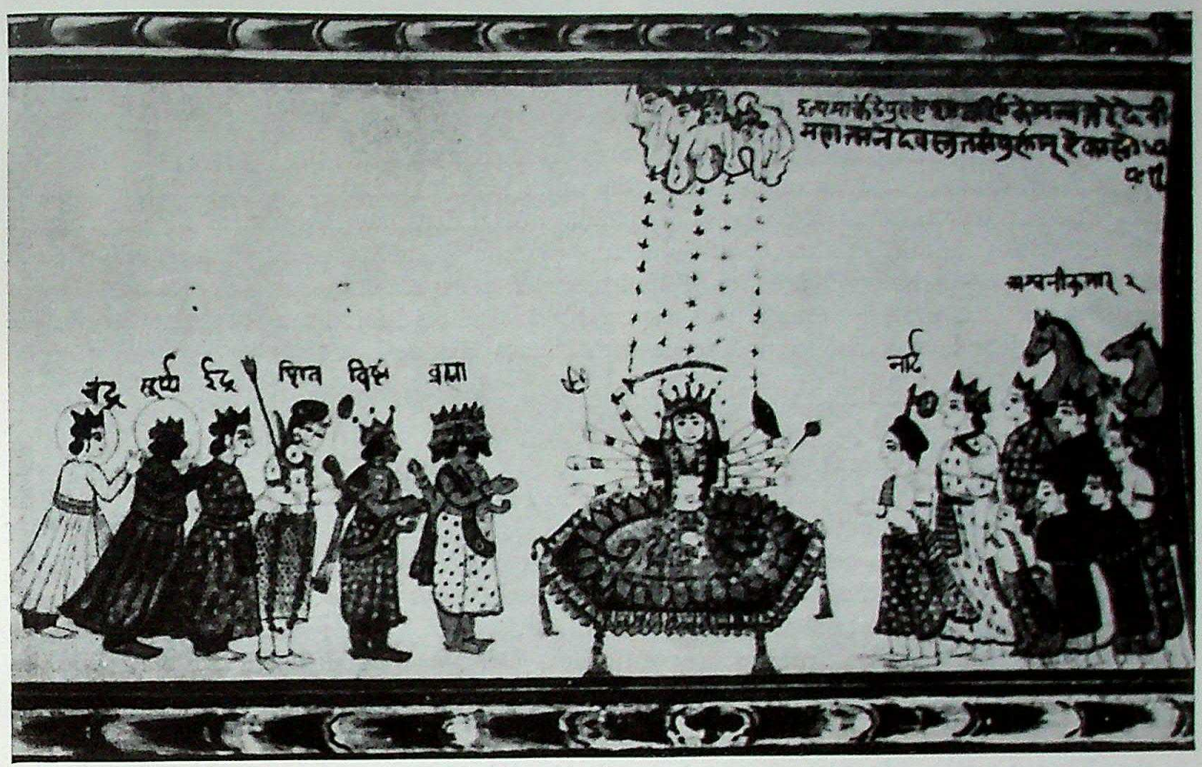

Fig. 62 *Mani Māṇā, Temple of Mansā Devī—'Homage to Devī.'*

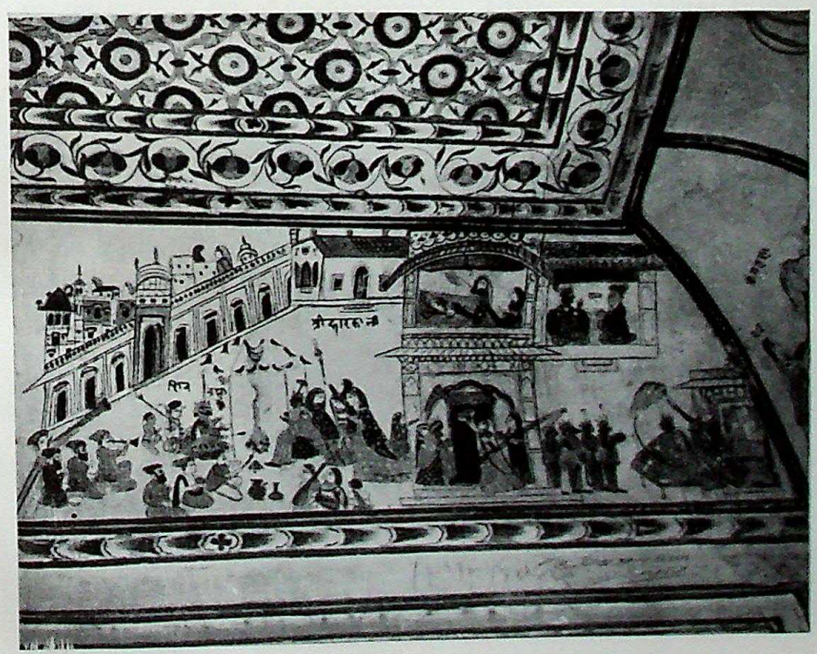

Fig. 63 *Mani Māṇā, Temple of Mansā Devī—'Kṛṣṇa's home in Dwaraka.'*

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PAṬIĀLĀ

Motī Mahal Palace

There are paintings in the Śīś Mahal of the old Motī Mahal palace which, according to Syed Mohammed Hassan, were commissioned by Rājā Mohinder Singh about A.D. 1840[21]. Although, these paintings are found in the plains of the Punjāb and quite far from the hills, their style, colour, drawing and themes are all in the same Pahāḍī tradition. Dr. B. N. Goswāmī's[22] researches in the *bahīs* (account books) of the pāñḍās of Haridvār have led him to conclude that a painter by the name of Devīdittā, son of Gursahāi, grandson of Rāñjha, great grandson of Nainsukh and great, great grandson of Pañḍit Seu of Guler, settled in Paṭiālā in the serivce of Rājā Mohinder Singh. It is not unlikely that he was responsible for the Śīś Mahal murals. They are in the typical Pahāḍī style and show acquaintance with Pahāḍī idioms.

The walls of the Śīś Mahal hall in which these paintings are found are covered with rows of vertical and horizontal panels. The ceiling of the palace is covered with a profusion of floral designs which seem to submerge the main themes. The drawing of these panels is very good, technically speaking, but the outlines tend to be more angular and less curvaceous, which has resulted in a certain amount of rigidity in the stances of the human figures. A rich variety of colours ranging from red ochre, maroon, orange, blue, green, yellow, purple, pink, black, white, brown, chocolate and gold as well as innumerable pastel shades of these colours have been used. Gold is used frequently, not only for the borders of clothes and jewellery but also at times for the backgrounds. There is also a multiplicity of themes. All these elements combine to produce an art which is doubtless pictorial but lacking in grace and feeling. These paintings are indeed the 'baroque' of Pahāḍī art.

The main theme found in these paintings is the life of Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd, his adventures

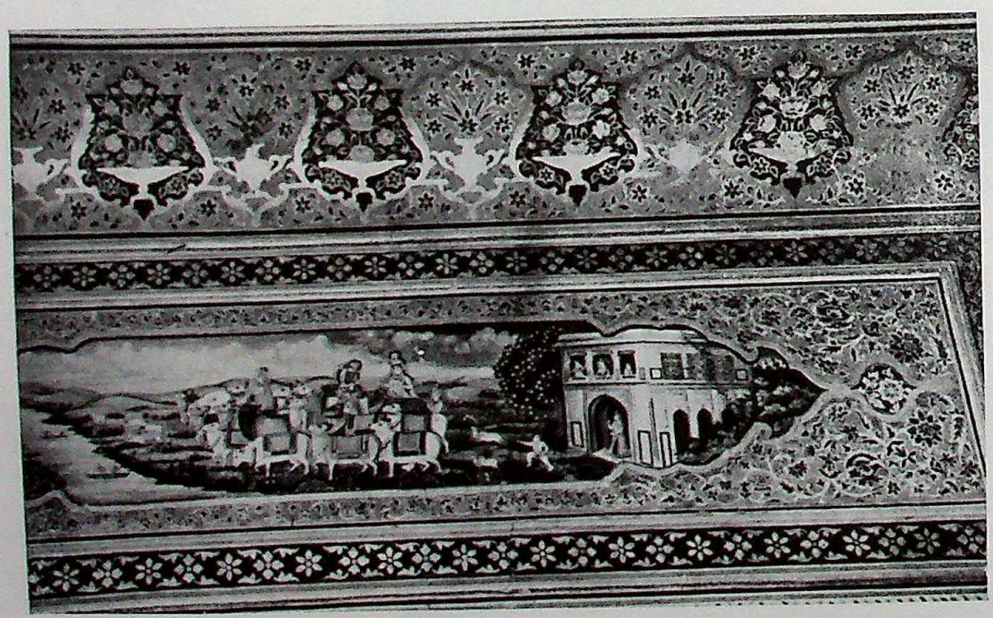

Fig. 64 *Paṭiālā, Motī Mahal Palace— 'Gopāl Kṛṣṇa going to graze cows.'*

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Fig. 65 *Paṭiālā, Motī Mahal Palace—'Kṛṣṇa visiting Rādhā at night.'*

Fig. 66 *Paṭiālā, Motī Mahal Palace—'Rādhā waiting for Kṛṣṇa.'*

with the *gopīs* and his dalliance with Rādhā, his frolies with the cowherds and his heroic deeds in Vṛndāvana. There are scenes of Kṛṣṇa as an infant being looked after by Yaśodā. He is illustrated stealing butter from his mother's pitcher, and going out of his home with his cows while mother Yaśodā is tenderly watching him (Fig. 64). There are attractive panels set on a background of green grasslands and trees in which Kṛṣṇa is shown playing hide and seek and the ball game with other cowherds. Kṛṣṇa as a lover is portrayed playing with the *gopīs* in the forest, stealing their clothes and in separate scenes with Rādhā either doing her *śṛṅgāra* or looking at her while she is having her bath, or visiting her at night (Fig. 65). The *nāyaka-nāyikābheda* theme is illustrated in many interesting panels showing Rādhā sitting alone at home waiting for Kṛṣṇa (Fig. 66), or going out to meet him at night, or sadly playing on a musical instrument, or lying on a bed, torn by the pangs of separation.

Besides the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legend, there are many illustrations of Pauraṇic themes. The *Mahiṣamardinī* theme showing the Devī fighting the Mahiṣāsura happens to be one of the most powerful compositions. There is also a scene of the Devī seated under a red canopy on a throne made of gold while the gods are paying homage to her. An interesting illustration depicts Śiva, Kārṭikeya and Gaṇeśa on their respective mounts. The *Narasiṁha*, *Matsya* and *Varāha Avatāra* themes are shown with dramatic effect. There is a composition of Hanumāna paying homage to Rāma and Sītā at their coronation. The famous mythological tale of *samudra-manthana* or the churning of the ocean by the *devatās* and *rākshasas* for nectar also finds a place. The most dramatic panel in this hall is, however, of the Yamaloka with the *darbār* of Yama, the god of death. He is

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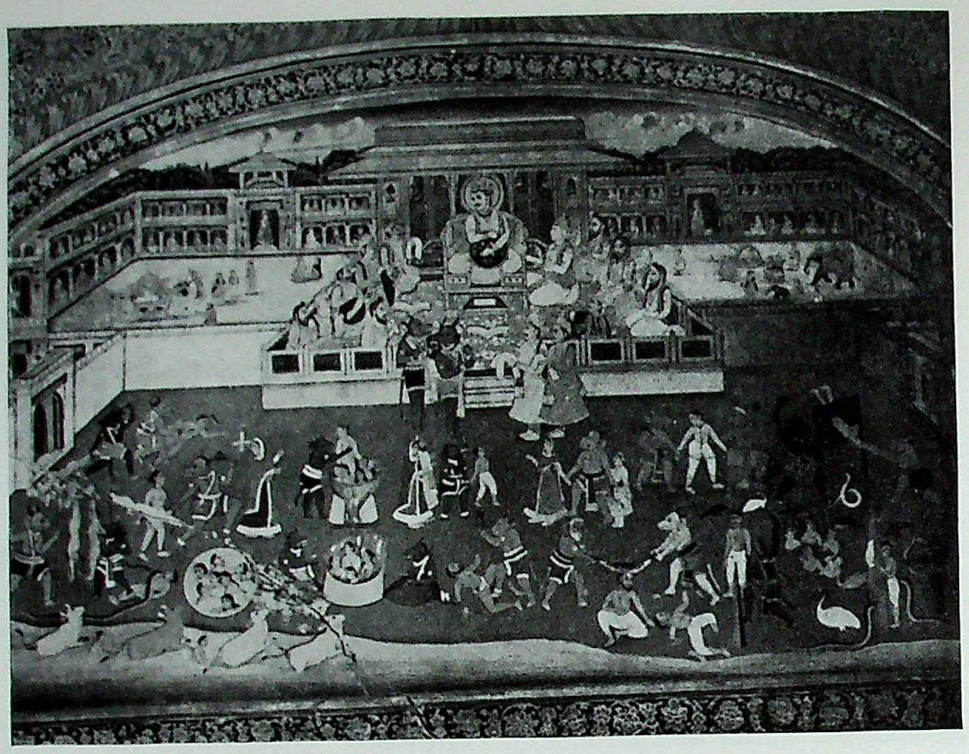
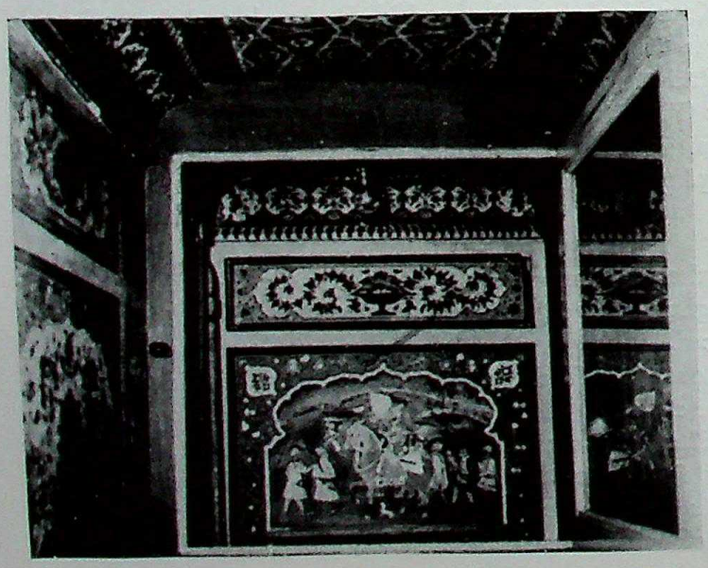


Fig. 67 *Paṭiālā, Motī Mahal Palace—'Yamaloka.'*

seen seated on his throne surrounded by *ṛṣis* and good men, while below him ordinary mortals are being punished for their sins on earth. There are gruesome scenes of women being boiled alive and men being beaten by *rākshasas* or bitten by snakes (Fig. 67).

Fig. 68 *Amritsar, Golden Temple—'Gurū Gobind Singh on horse back.'*



AMRITSAR

Golden Temple

The Golden Temple at Amritsar was founded by Gurū Rām Dās sometime in A.D. 1577 on a plot of land gifted to him by Akbar. The original temple was added to and embellished more than once by the time of Mahārājā Ranjīt Singh when the walls of the temple seem to have been painted.

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Plate XXVI

Rangmahal, Chambā

'Varshāvihāra.'

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Most of the walls of this great shrine are painted over with geometrical designs at times interspersed with mirror glasses. The colours used are vivid turquoise blue, orange, brown, black and white. We have, however, a typical illustration in the Pahāḍī fashion depicting Gurū Gobind Singh going out on a hunt (Fig. 68).

1. Khandelwālā, Kārl, *Pahāḍi Miniature Painting*, New Book Company, Bombay, 1958, p.
2. Statement made by Shri O. C. Sood, Maria Brothers, Simlā.
3. French, J. C., *Himālayan Art*, Oxford University Press, London, 1931, pps. 93-94.
4. Lālā Ganeshī Lāl, *Siyāhat-i-Kāshmīr* (*Kāshmīr Nāmā or Tārihk-i-Kāslmīr*) being an account of a journey to Kāshmīr. trans. by Vidyā Sāgar Sūri, Punjab Record Office, Simlā, 1955, pps. 5-6.
5. Statement made by Mahañta Lakshmaṇa Das in a personal interview at Dharamsāl Mahañtāñ in October, 1967.
6. *Punjāb State Gazetteer, Gazetteer of the Kāngrā District*, Vol. I, 1883-84, p. 139.
7. *Punjāb State Gazetteer*, Vol. VIII, *Simlā Hill States, Keonthal State Gazetteer*, pps. 5-7, gives the history of Keonthal State. From this it can be surmised that the lady who constructed this temple was perhaps the mistress of Rājā Sansār Sain who succeeded to the throne in A.D. 1814.
8. *Gazetteer of Gurdāspur District*, Vol. XXIA., 1914, pps. 16 & 27. Also see Goswāmī, B. N. and Grewāl, J. S., *The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaiṣṇavas of Piṇḍorī*, IIAS, Simlā, 1970, pps. 6-7.
9. Statement made by the present mahañta in a personal interview in December 1965.
Goswāmī, B. N., and Grewāl, J. S., *The Mughals* and *Sikh Rulers and the Vaiṣṇavas of Piṇḍorī*, op.cit., pps. 8 & 66.
10. *Punjāb State Gazetteer, Gazetteer of Gurdāspur District*, 1914, p. 29.
11. Mittal, Jagdīsh, Technical notes, *Mārg*, Vol. XVII, June 1964, No. 3, p. 51.
12. Gairolā, Dr. T. R., Chief Chemist, National Museum, in a personal interview in Delhi in 1967.
13. *ibid.*
14. *Vigne, G. T., Travels in Kāshmīr, Ladāk, Isharto the Countries Adjoining the Mountain Course of the Indus and the Himālayas, North of the Punjāb*, Henry Colburn, London, 1842, p. 80.
15. Hāṇḍā, Om Chand and Vaidya, Kishori Lal, *Pahāḍī Chitrakala*, National Publishing House, Delhi, 1969, p. 123.
16. *ibid*, p. 128.
17. Shri Rajendra Singh in a personal interview in Simlā in October, 1966. Also see *Punjāb State Gazetteer*, Vol. VIII, *Simlā Hill State*, 1910, *Baghal State Gazetteer*, p. 4.
18. Hāṇḍā, Om Chand & Vaidya, Kishori Lal, *Pahāḍī Citrakalā*, op.cit.
19. *Ambālā District Gazetteer*, 1883-84, p. 78.
20. Dr. B. N. Goswāmī, Professor of Fine Arts, Panjāb University, revealed this in personal discussions in Chanḍīgarh in 1965.
21. Hasan Sayed Muhammad, *Tarikh-i-Paṭiālā* (Urdu) found in the Archives of Punjāb Government, Paṭiālā.
22. Goswāmī, B. N., "Pāhāḍī Painting: The family as the basis of style", *Marg* Vol. XXI, September, 1968, No. 4, pps. 2-57.

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5

TECHNIQUE, FORM AND STYLE

THE CLASSICAL TRADITION of *bhittī-chitra* or wall-painting, examples of which are still to be seen at places like Bāgh, Ajantā and Ellorā, does not seem to have survived long after the fifth century in India except in the South. Even there, the form and style of murals appear to have undergone considerable change. In the North, it seems that the style of miniature painting became more popular. This can be seen from the manuscript illustrations of the eleventh, twelfth and subsequent centuries in Bihār, Bengāl and Nepāl and in the eleventh to fifteenth century in Gujarāt and Rājasthān. At the same time, it appears likely that the wall painting tradition did not completely die down as can be seen from the meagre remnants of Sultānate and Mughal paintings at Māṇḍu and Fatehpur Sīkrī respectively. Dating from the eighteenth century onwards, wall paintings are found in Rājasthān and the Western Himālayas. Their existence also presupposes the possibility of a continuous mural tradition having existed in Northern India from classical times. It is but natural that in the murals of the Western Himālayas and Rājasthān we witness many changes of technique and style from what was prevalent in classical times.

The technical formulae adopted by the artists of Ajantā and Bāgh for preparing the walls for executing frescos are well-known[1]. The method ,and technique of preparation of the ground employed in the Western Himālayas is quite different. Unlike the earlier wall paintings which were painted on rock surfaces, the paintings of the Western Himālayas were executed on man-made walls. The technique of preparing the plaster or ground for these wall paintings has been scientifically analysed only in the case of the Rangmahal paintings of Chambā and the Kulū Devī mural by the chemists of the National Museum, New Delhi.

Dr. Gairolā[2], Chief Chemist of the National Museum, New Delhi, has analysed many specimens from the Rangmahal paintings of Chambā. This analysis shows that the wall, made of stone, rubble and mud, was enclosed in wooden battens. After that, a layer of mud and straw up to a thickness of 5 mm. to 31 mm. was applied to the walls. Then lime or *Makaul* plaster in layers

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Plate XXVII

Rangmahal, Chambā

'Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the forest.'

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of 6 mm. to 44 mm. was applied to the surface. Samples of lime plaster taken from these paintings indicate that it was usually preceded by the application of a coat of mud on the walls after which a mixture of lime and mortar was applied. When this process was completed, occasionally a lime wash was given. Otherwise, a thick layer of lime was added straight on the wall without any intermediary coats being applied.

The Devī mural of Kulū has also been analysed by Shri O. P. Aggarwal[3] of the National Museum. He has found that only lime plaster of two types was applied—one rough in texture containing mortar and the other fine. The plaster varied in thickness but it was normally 40 mm. to 50 mm. thick.

Many other scholars have tried to investigate the methods of preparing the grounds of these wall paintings. For instance, Shri K. C. Ārya has analysed the surface of the Nūrpur wall paintings[4] and Jagdish Mittal has studied the Kulū Devī mural and the walls of Damtāl[5]. These analyses are, however, based on conjecture and not on any scientific data. It would be safe to presume that the walls of the other centres of mural paintings in the Western Himālayas were prepared in the same manner as those of the Rangmahal murals of Chambā and the Kulū Devī mural, on the lines suggested by the scientific analysis carried out in the case of the former.

After the wall was prepared, the drawings were executed straight on to the surface with brushes which were almost invariably made of squirrel hair. They varied in thickness from fine brushes to slightly thicker ones. There does not appear to be any evidence to support Dr. Mulk Rāj Ānand's contention[6] that the sketched outline of the *khākā* or drawing was made by sprinkling charcoal dust on a stencil. While microscopic dots on the outlines of the drawings of some of the miniatures indicate the use of stencil, there is no evidence for their use in the wall paintings. It seems more likely that the artists first drew a model sketch on a small piece of paper and then enlarged it on the wall. A set of nine such model paintings varying in size from 11 cm. to 15 cm. have been found[7] (Fig. 69). They are executed on paper and the drawing is rough as is generally the case in making preliminary sketches. They were also meant to indicate the composition and the colour scheme which had to be employed on the walls. Their borders are outlined in black, orange or maroon instead of the floral embellishments found around Kāngrā miniatures. The designs of these models have been copied in toto in a few of the wall paintings. In three of these models, Lakshmī and Viṣṇu are illustrated seated on a lotus seat. In one of them

Fig. 69 *Models for wall paintings.*

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Śiva and Pārvatī are on their mounts—the bull and tiger—and in another they are seated under a tree (Fig. 70). Exact replicas of these two models are found in the Chambā Rangmahal murals. Sarasvatī seated alone on a lotus seat playing on her *vīṇā* is found at Pinḍorī. Finally, a Shogī

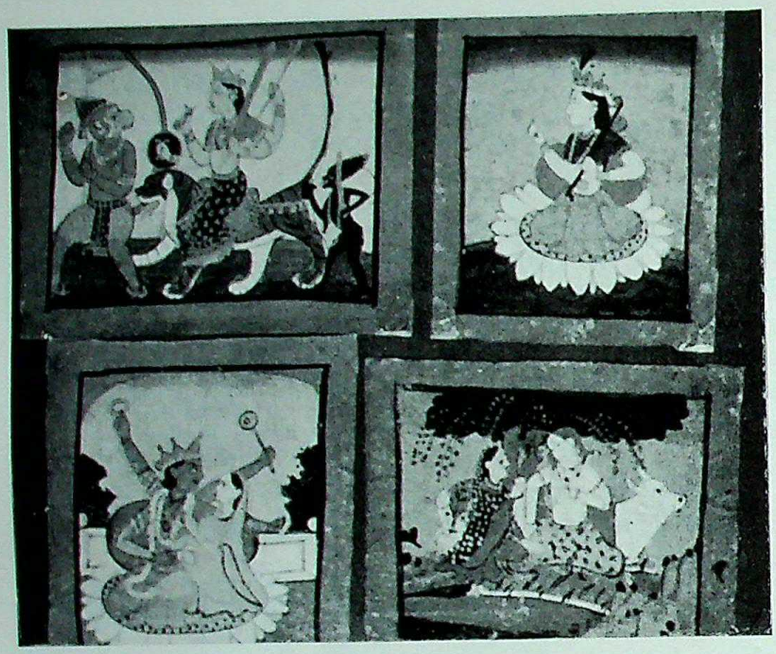

Fig. 70 *Models for wall paintings.*

painting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in which they are shown standing leaning against a cow has many resemblances to a similar model found in this collection.

It appears that in some of the wall paintings the actual drawing was done with brushes whereas in others with charcoal. Traces of charcoal lines are found in the Narmadeśvara and Gaurīśaṅkara temples in Sujānpur Tīrā, in Nadaun and in Shogī. In Chambā, however, there are no traces of charcoal and it seems the drawings were made either with the colours to be used inside the paintings or in a red outline.

The drawing in the wall paintings of the Western Himālayas is basically linear. The artists were conversant with the use of straight, curved and rounded lines. The use of straight lines is remarkably effective in the Kulū Devī mural (Fig. 57). Curved lines are, however, more popular. In the Narmadeśvara temple painting of Yaśodā holding the newly born Kṛṣṇa in her arms while her *dāsīs* are fluttering around her with various medicines (Fig. 4) a very effective use is made of such lines. The arched back of a *dāsī* holding a piece of cloth over Yaśodā's head in this painting demonstrates a masterly use of the curved flowing line. The drawings of the Rājasthān wall paintings found at Bairat, Bhaupurā, Jaipur, Alwar, Mewār, Bikāner and Bundi have a pronounced angularity of line. This is best illustrated by the sharp jaw line, eyes and skirts of the beautiful *nāyikās* found in Galtā in Jaipur. In the Pahāḍī wall paintings, angular lines are rarely used. The attempt is always to employ rounded lines. A beautiful illustration of the use of rounded lines is found in the Shogī illustration of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa reclining against a cow (Fig. 39).

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Plate XXVIII

Rangmahal, Chambā

'Rāma with Sītā after his *rajabhisheka*.'

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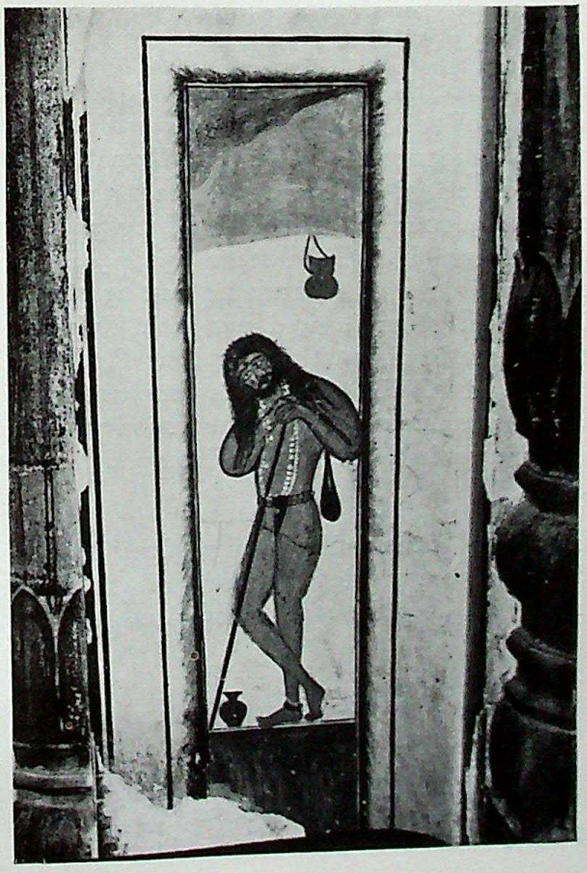
In Damtāl, Pinḍorī and Chambā in some of the panels (Figs. 17 and 32 and Plate XXIII) lines are sometimes angular but they do not approach the angularity of Rājasthānī drawings.

Modelling and shading are significant elements of drawing. The modelled plastic line was very popular in the classical tradition. The use of this line was, however, completely given up in the Jain painting of Western India which was characterised by sharp lines and angles. The Mughals seem to have integrated the sharp Persian line with the plastic modelled line of the Indian classical tradition. The modelled line is not as pronounced in the wall paintings of the Western Himālayas as in Mughal paintings. It is only used in the Kulū Devī mural (Fig. 57) and in Dharamsāl (Fig. 71). Everywhere else flat, sharp lines are used. The effect of complete flatness seen in Jain painting and in most of the Rājasthānī schools, is avoided in the Western Himālayas by the frequent use of rounded lines and, what is even more important, by the effective use of shading as in later Akbarī and Jahāngīrī miniatures. Shading is employed to give a slightly modelled effect in Kulū (Fig. 57), in Narmadeśvara (Fig. 4) and in Shogī (Fig. 39).

The quality of the drawing varies from centre to centre and it can be generally said that there is more power and strength in the drawings of the earlier wall paintings than in the later ones where the lines tend to become more unsure and flat.

Fig. 71 *Dharamsāl Mahañtañ—'A fakir (religious mendicant).'*



After finishing the drawing, the artists set about colouring their paintings. Almost all the colours used were minerals except for blue which was either ultramarine or indigo. Red was made from an indigenous clay known as *humachi* or limestone; black was either carbon or prepared from coconut shell; green was prepared from a stone called *sang-i-sabz*; yellow from yellow ochre. As a first stage in the colouring of paintings the master artist indicated on various portions of the drawings the colours which were to be painted on them.

This practice can be seen from some of the unfinished paintings at Damtāl on which colours are written. At times the colours were applied in layer after layer to get the required shades. By taking photomicrographs which reveal different layers of pigments, Dr. Gairolā has discovered three layers of paintings, depicting the same theme, in one of the panels of Chambā Rangmahal paintings.

Resin, glue and gum appear to have been used as adhesives for pigments in paintings of the Western Himālayas. These media do not, however, occur in their absolute purity and components of one are found mixed with

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another. This may not have been done intentionally but is due to age, vandalism or deliberate efforts to improve the paintings. It is, therefore, very difficult to establish in isolation the particular adhesive for pigments which was used in any given centre of wall paintings.

Brush strokes are not seen in any of our paintings. In all probability, the ingenuity of the brush has ceased to be evident, first because liquid colours were used and secondly because so many colours were applied on top of each other. The finished colour application looks smooth, even and compact.

The quality of the colours and the style of colouring itself differ from one centre to another. On the whole, it can be said that the artists of Pahāḍī wall paintings laid stress on the use of all shades of red, mineral green, brown, orange and blue. The touch in applying colours is very light in the earlier wall paintings but it becomes rather gaudy and heavy in the later centres like Paṭiālā, Maṇī Mājrā and Amritsar.

After the drawings were coloured, varnish was applied to the paintings in a few centres. This was made out of shellac which was dissolved in spirit and thinned according to the requirements of the artist. Shellac varnish has been applied to the paintings in Rangmahal, Chambā, and in Motī Mahal, Paṭiālā. It is quite clear that the paintings of Sujānpur Tīrā, Shogī, Nūrpur, Pinḍorī and the ground floor of the Damtāl *maṭha* were polished either by rubbing cowries or shells on them, or by a different polish which has not yet been technically analysed but which gives a brilliant and blooming finish to them. This is a departure from the wall painting tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which have no traces of varnish.

In composition, the artists of the wall paintings followed the older tradition of Ajantā and Bāgh. Like their predecessors of Ajantā and Bāgh, many of the Pahāḍī painters knew the importance of maintaining the continuity of narrative in compositions. In Nūrpur, Kṛṣṇa's entry into Kaṁsa's palace and his final victory over him are all described in a narrative form in the same panel (Fig. 1). The Devī mural at Kulū is one continuous narrative panel describing pilgrims travelling to Tripurāsundarī's palace and then paying homage to her. In the first floor painting of Damtāl, Śūrpanākhā's visit to Rāma and Lakshmaṇa in the forest and the cutting of her nose by Lakshmaṇa are all illustrated in consecutive panels. Kṛṣṇa's wedding with Rukminī, with its different ceremonies all painted in adjacent panels in Raghunāthjī's temple at Pinḍorī is again handled in the narrative form (Plates XV, XVI and XVII). In Devī's temple at Maṇi Mājra, scenes illustrating Śiva's marriage are repeated in continuous panels. The majority of the panels in Western Himālayas, however, follow the miniatures in the principle of composition, inasmuch as they contain independent compositions.

Another important point concerning the composition of the wall paintings of the Western Himālayas is the fact that great emphasis is placed on the accurate depiction of figures in them. Each figure is separate from the other and no figure crosses over the other or overlaps it. This is also a characteristic of Rājasthānī painting.

Grouping of figures is important in the construction of compositions of paintings in the Western Himālayas. The most significant or the central character of the theme which is being illustrated is always displayed in the centre of the composition, whereas the other figures merely converge towards it. A Narmadeśvara (Plate IV) painting of Śiva seated on Mount Kailāśa with Devī, surrounded by his disciples and witnessing the performance of a dancer illustrates this

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Plate XXIX

Rangmahal, Chambā

'Śiva and Pārvatī in the forest.'

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point. In the *Govardhanadhāraṇa* illustrations, Kṛṣṇa is invariably seen in the centre of the composition (Fig. 17). It is also interesting to note that, as in miniature paintings, the chief character of the story is not only drawn in the centre but is also painted larger in size than the others. In a painting of Nanda rescuing Kṛṣṇa who is sucking his thumb at Narmadeśvara (Plate VIII), Nanda is drawn much bigger than all other human figures. Another important aspect in the grouping of figures is that their social status can be easily determined by their distance from the central figure. This can be witnessed in the stiff court protocol of seating arrangements made in the court of Kaṁsa at Nūrpur (Plate II) where the nobles are shown seated next to the *rājā* and the musicians come at the very end of the panel. This practice was in consonance with the earlier traditions as well as contemporary Rājasthānī painting and the ancient literature on this subject.

Details of architecture, landscape and animals in the various compositions are never allowed to take the pride of place, although architecture is often used as an instrument to lend perspective and background to the composition. Kṛṣṇa's palace in Piṇḍorī (Plate XVI) and Nanda's home in Narmadeśvara (Plate VIII) illustrate this use of architecture. It was also employed to give a historical perspective in a few of the paintings, for example, in Nūrpur (Plate I) the style of the architecture of the fort painted in this panel gives an air of antiquity to the entire composition. Trees are always shown in the distance and never detract attention from the main characters of the drama (Plate XXIX). Animals are depicted not as characters in themselves but as subsidiary figures meant to underline the emotional content of the compositions. Cows are invariably introduced in Pahāḍī wall paintings to evoke tenderness as seen in the various *Govardhanadhāraṇa* scenes at the different centres, deer found in Rangmahal and Shogī paintings impart pathos to the loneliness of ladies. Horses are generally meant to create an atmosphere of excitement as seen in the Narmadeśvara hunting scene (Plate XI).

The optical balance is the primary balance used by the artists of these wall paintings. This is clearly seen in a Narmadeśvara scene showing Nanda rescuing Kṛṣṇa while he is sucking his big toe which has got stuck in his mouth. In this composition, the central figure is that of Nanda—on his right hand there are seven human figures whereas to his left there are only five. The fact that Nanda is made to look towards the left and also slightly tilt towards it gives an optical illusion of the composition being divided in two equal halves (Plate XI).

Mural painting involves an awareness of space and it must be said to the credit of the artists of our wall paintings that they were aware of the importance of creating an illusion of space. It is true that the size of most of these wall paintings is a little larger than miniatures and there are architectural limitations of space but still an idea of space has been well created. In the Damtāl Mahābhārata illustration of Kṛṣṇa setting out for war (Fig. 10) this depiction of space is seen at its best. Similar is the case of the Devī mural itself, where, although the mural covers only a small physical area, yet by the device of having vertical and horizontal panels, an illusion of a huge concourse of people spread out over a vast space all moving towards the Devī has been very successfully created.

For an understanding of the technique of wall painting it is very essential to appreciate its relation to architecture and to assess their mutual interaction and influence on each other. In fact, it is a truism to say that the art of wall painting rises and falls with the state of architecture. Every great style in architecture has had a corresponding style in wall painting. There was no significant development in architecture during the nineteenth century in the Western Himālayas.

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Except for the temple of Shogī which has a wooden roof and slight Tibetan overtones (Fig. 37), the rest of the buildings are either in the Mughal style as at Nūrpur, Damtāl or Piṇḍorī or in Rājasthānī architectural moulds as at Narmadeśvara (Fig. 23), Gaurīśaṅkara, Nadaun, Maṇī Mājra and Dharamsāl or even in a hybrid of these two styles as at Mañḍi, Dādā Sibā, Chambā, Ḍerā Bābā Nānak and Motī Mahal, Paṭiālā. The architecture of the times was on the whole imitative; hence it was devoid of any capacity to inspire new departures in the field of other artistic activities.

Not only was there no interaction between the style of painting and architecture but there does not appear to have been any coordination either between the architect and the painter. In fact, most of the paintings seem to have been done much later. It is perhaps due to this that the architect went ahead with building innumerable cornices and niches, even on the walls of small rooms, little realising the effect it would have on breaking the continuity of the paintings.

This lack of coordination between the architect and the painter had significant influence on the composition, balance, rhythm and style of these wall paintings. As far as composition is concerned, the artist knew the art of composing in the true wall painting style in big panels portraying continuous narratives as seen in Nūrpur (Fig. 1). Gradually the limitations imposed by the small spaces left by the architect necessitated compositions in small panels. In fact they got so accustomed to this limitation that, when later on comparatively larger spaces were available as in Damtāl and Motī Mahal palace, they still painted small panels.

The architectural limitation had another effect on these wall paintings in the sense that the artists became so accustomed to painting in spaces left within niches and cornices that, even when the architect did not construct niches, the painter painted likenesses of niches within the panel and painted the main scene in them as can be seen in many paintings of Narmadeśvara, (Fig. 4 and Plate VIII). Such architectural influences are also in evidence in Rājasthānī wall paintings where again the artist was forced to compose in small panels.

An important result of this unimaginative architecture, as far as wall paintings were concerned, was that the artists, in an effort to create unity, made extensive use of geometrical lines so that the eye could travel easily from one part of the composition to the other. The artist of the wall paintings was left by the architect with the horizontal line by the intersection of the wall and the ceiling and the vertical line created by the corners of the room and other interruptions on the walls. These lines existed in all the buildings from time immemorial because from the point of view of Indian mental geometry the line of rest (horizontal line) is contrasted with the line of aspiration (vertical line). This principle of emphasis on horizontal and vertical lines was practised in medieval sculpture and in our dance and music.[8] In smaller rooms the horizontal line is emphasised in order to create intimacy in the room. In Damtāl, Piṇḍorī, Narmadeśvara and the *Śivālaya* of Nadaun, horizontal sub-divisions are preferred. Vertical panels exist, but only to avoid monotony or where the space left by the architect requires the painting of a vertical panel. In places like Dādā Sibā, Motī Mahal palace, Paṭiālā, Chambā and in the earliest temples of Shogī and Nūrpur as well as at Gaurīśaṅkara, vertical sub-divisions were chosen because the architect had left comparatively larger free spaces on walls. But here also, horizontal panels exist in order to introduce variety. It has been noticed that generally the horizontal panels were painted on the space nearer the ceiling and vertical panels lower down on the walls. Horizontal and vertical panels are combined in equal importance and with equally striking effect

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in the Devī mural of Kulū. However, on the whole it cannot be denied that too much emphasis on horizontals and verticals tends to make the arrangement of paintings somewhat mechanical.

The wall paintings of the Western Himālayās lack the natural rhythm of Ajantā which is not confined to any group of scenes or sequence of scenes. Architectural details in the temples and palaces break this sense of rhythm and continuity. The practice of painting floral designs on the ceilings and around the main panels and introducing separate floral panels was followed in order to give rhythm and coherence to the paintings. In the earlier paintings, the emphasis is on rhythmic and continuous narration whereas in the later paintings more importance is given to creating a decorative effect. At Shogī and Nūrpur, elaborate floral designs were, on the whole, not used and there was greater harmony and unity in the scheme of painting. In places like Piṇḍorī, Narmadeśvara and Nadaun the delicacy and elegance of the colours used prevented the floral designs from looking crude and jarring or detracting from the basic harmony of the paintings. In the later paintings as found in the Rangmahal palace, Chambā, Dādā Siba, the first floor of Damtāl, Ḍerā Bābā Nānak and especially in Motī Mahal palace, Paṭiālā (Fig. 72), the floral designs are jarring and purely decorative.

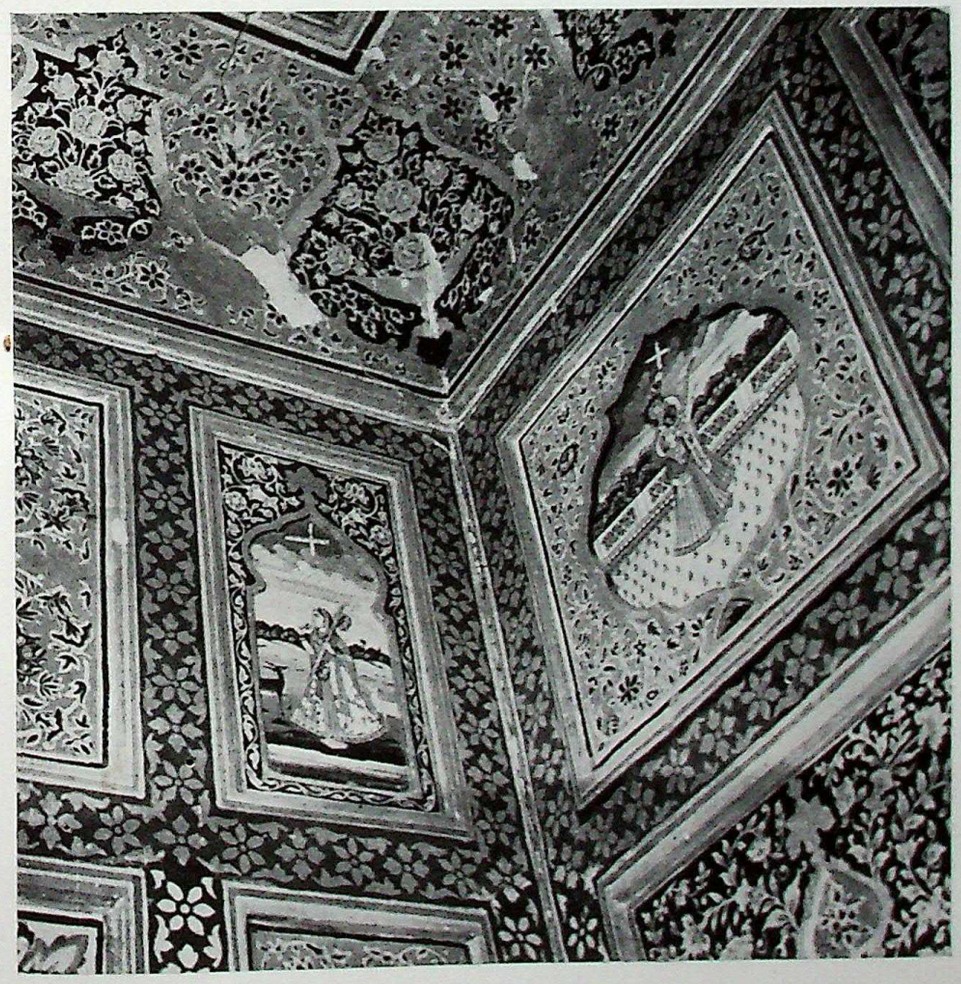

Fig. 72 *Paṭiālā, Motī Mahal Palace— 'Floral designs.'*

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At this stage, the question naturally arises as to whether these paintings were part of a harmonious creation of art or were primarily intended to be decorative. In the wall paintings of the Western Himālayas, as in the Italian murals of the Renaissance, the attitudes and aesthetic concepts of the patrons of these paintings are one of the determining factors contributing to their nature and quality. Unlike the princes of the Italian Renaissance, the *rājās* of the Western Himālayas did not have a very evolved aesthetic philosophy. The royal patrons of Pahāḍī painting did not look on it as a significant constituent in the making of a beautiful temple or palace. They saw it as an art which decorated their walls. These paintings which should have blended with the architecture were treated primarily as objects of ornamentation. This could best be illustrated by a local tradition prevalent in Nūrpur according to which Golū, the carpenter and architect of the *Ṭhākurdvārā* at Nūrpur, was ordered to cover up the bare walls of this temple because it was noticed that they were leaking and looking ugly. This story also shows the secondary part that wall painting played in the total execution of a work of art.

The ritualistic religious beliefs of the royal patrons and the artists also tended to reduce wall paintings to the level of mere decorative works. As a result of such beliefs and due to an urge to reform and propagate them, they tended to choose the most popular legends from the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* which were evocative of immediate response from the common people. The celebrated legends like the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Rāma and Sītā and Śiva and Pārvatī naturally lent themselves to very decorative presentation. In the actual technique of painting also, the patrons and the artists chose to depict the popular themes in small panels so that an ordinary visitor could appreciate them without taxing his imagination too much. As a further concession to plebian taste, they embellished the panels with a variety of floral designs. These floral designs helped, more than anything else, to give a decorative character to these paintings. In the choice of floral motifs, the Pahāḍī paintings were not alone as a similar tradition prevailed in Rājasthānī wall paintings. There is great similarity in design also. The paintings in the Dīvānjī-kī-Havelī in Alwar have floral designs very similar to those found in the Narmadeśvara temple at Sujānpur Tīrā.

Another important contributing reason for the decorative character of these wall paintings was the lack of good sculptures which could be employed for decorative purposes. Unlike medieval architecture which is invariably decorated with sculptural friezes, the temples and palaces of the Western Himālayas in which our paintings are found are almost devoid of any sculptural effect except for the main statue needed as an object of worship. It is also significant to note that hardly any furniture was used inside the buildings. Thus painting came to be used as the only important method of decoration of buildings.

In short, the aesthetic concepts of the patrons, the ritualistic beliefs of the artists and the princes and the lack of effective sculpture all contributed to make Pahāḍī wall paintings very decorative in character.

An important issue which has to be raised for a correct appraisal of the wall paintings of the Western Himālayas is to assess the quantum of originality and imagination versus convention in the composition of this art. The analysis given so far in this chapter throws more indications of the conventional nature of this art than any breadth and vision of imagination. A discussion of the sources of its inspiration would also tend to lead us to the same conclusion.

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Plate XXX

Rangmahal, Chambā

'Worship of the Śiva Liṅga.'

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One of the main springs of Pahāḍī painting was the current literary tradition of *Rīti Kāla*. This tradition had as its principal emotive mood *Śṛṅgāra Rasa* or the feeling of love and eroticism. Love, however, was not expressed in a straight-forward manner as an end in itself. It adopted symbols for its expression. Symbolically speaking, it made use of the concept of *prema*, the love of the divine to the exclusion of everything else, which was preached by the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the ascendent *Purāṇa*, from the fifteenth century onwards. Who could be better examples of *prema* than Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, the divine lovers? Poets naturally adopted them. This is best illustrated by the *dohā*:

आगे के सुकवि रीझी है तो कविताई
न तो राधिका गोविन्द सुमिरन को बहानो है।

This *dohā* states that in the past poets wrote spontaneously without hiding behind the symbols of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Gradually, the language of literary expression itself became conventionalised. The devotees of Rāma wrote in *Avadhī* deriving its name from Avadh, the birth place of Rāma. The followers of Kṛṣṇa gave vent to their feelings in *Braj Bhāṣā*—a name derived from Vṛndavana where Kṛṣṇa had his romantic exploits with Rādhā and the *gopīs*. In Rājasthān these languages were known as *Dīngal* and *Pīngal* respectively. The Rājpūt migrations to the hills from the ninth century onwards brought to this area influences of Rājasthānī language as well[9]. It is also possible that further social, religious and cultural contacts between royal families belonging to the same social milieu in the hills and Rājasthān strengthened these contacts. For instance, Moorcroft states that Sansār Chand of Nadaun heard *Braj Bhāṣā* songs in the morning[10]. Although not spoken by the common people, this dialect came to be understood by them. This can be seen from the fact that the tradition of hearing *Braj Bhāṣā kathās* under the village banyan tree survives to this day.

The royal patrons of Pahāḍī paintings were circumscribed by the prevalent literary tradition to a great extent, in the choice of the subject matter for illustrations on the walls of their temples and palaces. They felt that there could be no better themes than those contained in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*—the *Sarva Prathama Purāṇa* of poets. *Rīti Kāla* poetry roused their passions and desires but as straight-forward indulgence was not in form, they wanted to see love depicted symbolically. Hence they impressed on the artists the desirability of painting Vaiṣṇava legends, particularly relating to the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Rāma and Sītā. The artists were thus thematically circumscribed by their patrons. This conventional choice of themes made for a limitation on originality in artistic representation.

The social conditions of the times were also responsible for the production of a conventional art. Chivalry and romance, war and hunting were the main preoccupations of Rājpūt society. The *rājās* and their courtiers were fond of wine, women and music. Life was on the whole inhibited and confined in the Western Himālayas. Conditioned by cramped patterns of behaviour, such a religious, rigid, conventional and traditional society could not be expected to produce a robust and highly imaginative art; hence conventional and mechanical presentation of limited themes in painting was the result.

The fact that the art of miniatures preceded the wall paintings further contributed towards their conventional character. The size of the mural paintings and even their compositions owed a great deal to the miniatures. It was, therefore, natural that when miniature size composi-

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tions were adopted for the walls, the drawing was to a certain extent less defined, limited, static and conventionalised. Inventiveness declined and rigid adherence to the old styles and forms of miniatures became customary.

The extent to which the style of painting itself became unrealistic is further seen by the fact that it adopted motifs and styles of representation of themes which largely ignored the beautiful topography of the Himālayas. For example, this region is full of rugged, sun-burnt peaks and mountains and hills. Their character is rough and dangerous, sometimes with a stark majesty and at others it is soothing, gentle and light. This character of the mountains has nowhere been brought out by the painters of the wall paintings. The illustrations of mountains found in this region are quite conventional. The artist, while showing the abode of Śiva in Mount Kailāśa at Narmadeśvara (Plate IV) which is one of the highest peaks of the Himālayas, depicts this great mountain only by a series of rectangular rocks. This painting dismally fails to convey the grandeur either of Mount Kailaśa or even the majesty of the great *yogī*. It is only in the Gaurīsaṅkara temple of Sujānpur Tirā that the Dhaola Dhār peaks, as well as the low hills surrounding the valley, are painted with some degree of realism. Even here, the representation is more lyrical and depicts the gentler side of the hills rather than their dangerous and rugged character (Plate XIII). The representation of rivers too is extremely conventional. In the Devī mural of Kulū (Plate XXII and Fig. 73) there is a river in dark grey containing fish, crocodiles and small islands. But it appears to be static and immobile, a mere demarcation to show that a river is supposed to exist on the spot, whereas actually in Kulū the river Beās is so beautiful that its grandeur has to be seen to be believed. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* it is mentioned that when Vāsudeva carried the newly-born Kṛṣṇa across the Yamunā to leave him in Vṛndāvana in Nanda's home, the river is supposed to have receded when his footsteps touched it to make way for the journey of Kṛṣṇa. In a Piṇḍorī scene depicting this theme, the river Yamunā is shown as totally lacking in turbulance of any kind (Fig. 13).

Pahāḍi painting is the subject of a controversy with different proponents claiming that it can be divided into distinct *Kalams* or styles and definite schools whereas according to others the whole complex of Kāngrā painting was inspired by a single family and its ramifications. Dr. B. N. Goswāmī, Professor of Fine Arts in the Panjāb University, has put forward an idea that there is a possibility of the entire painting of the hills of the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century having been influenced by the creative efforts of a single family[11]. He gives this unique distinction to the family of Pañḍit Seu, an artist belonging

Fig. 73 *Kulū, Sultānpur Palace—'A river.'*

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Plate XXXI

Rangmahal, Chambā

'Girls on a swing celebrating the arrival of the monsoon.'

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to the *tarkhān* or carpenter caste and a resident of Guler. He had two sons, Manakū and Nainsukh. The former with his sons Fattū and Khushālā continued to work in Guler. Nainsukh, the younger son, seems to have been more enterprising and found employment in Basholi. Nainsukh in turn had four sons—Kama, Gaudhū, Nikkā and Rānjhā. The older two sons worked, in all probability, in Guler. Nikkā migrated to Rajaul in tehsil Rihlū in Chambā and his family continued to live there except for his grandsons, Saudāgar and Jauhar, who may perhaps have migrated to Ṭehrī-Garhwāl. The youngest son of Nainsukh, Rānjhā, seems to have continued to live in Basholi after his father's death but his grandson Deviditta seems to have migrated to Lāhore and then to Paṭiālā. According to Goswāmī, it was the same family which was responsible for much of the work at Guler, Basholi, Chambā and later on in Lāhore and Paṭiālā. Dr. Goswāmī also credits this family with having originated the famous Bhāgavata Face of Kāngrā painting and of having their work being treated as a model by other artists in various places.

Dr. Goswāmī's thesis has some degree of plausibility. But even he does not go so far as to suggest that one family could be responsible for the entire gamut of paintings executed in the Pahāḍī region during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. No member of the family migrated to the Simlā hills, to Kulū nor to Mañḍī which were centres of a rich and varied artistic activity during this period. Dr. Goswāmī's view that the style evolved by the family of Pañḍit Seu and his descendants seems to have acted as a model for the paintings of this period does not appear to be correct as far as the wall paintings of this region are concerned.

Stylistically speaking, the wall paintings discussed in this book fall in the same genre inasmuch as they have many basic similarities. The artists responsible for them, as pointed out in Chapter 2, belonged to different castes. Hence the possibility of their coming from the same family does not exist. It is also to be noted that most of the paintings found in different regions of the Western Himālayas are quite distinct from each other in many respects, mostly depending on their geographical location, although some of them can be grouped together stylistically because of their physical contiguity. Shogī has by far the best drawing and it has a style of colouring which is quite distinct from any other style of painting in this area. Similarly, even when there was just a single patron or a family of patrons as in the case of Rājā Sansār Chand of Kāngrā for the temples of Gaurīśaṅkara and Narmadeśvara in Sujānpur Tirā and *Śivālaya* in Nadaun, the colouring of their paintings as well as drawing are quite different from each other. Not only this, even in Narmadeśvara itself there are two different styles of drawing and three styles of painting. This point can be further elaborated by giving the example of similarities in drawing and painting that exist between the styles of Nūrpur, Damtāl and Pinḍorī. Broadly speaking, they fall in the same stylistic pattern and geographically also are quite near to each other. But even in this case the drawing and colouring of the Nūrpur wall paintings is quite superior to the work done in the other two centres. It seems that the line lost some of its purity and fineness when it came down from the heights of Nūrpur to the plains of Damtāl and Pinḍorī. The eyes of the human figures and moustaches of men are similar in these centres but Nūrpur drawings have more power. In colouring also, Nūrpur scores in variety and quality over the other centres.

Sometimes the principle of similarity due to continuity did not operate at all as in the case of Kūlu and Mañḍī paintings where there is hardly anything in common between the sophisticated and vital lines of Kulū and the wooden drawings of Mañḍī. The conclusion that this principle is not universal is also illustrated by the fact that though Chambā is quite far from Pinḍorī and

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Paṭiālā there are some similarities of style between the Rangmahal paintings of Chambā and those found in Bābā Mahesh Dās kī *Samādhi* in Pinḍorī and Motī Mahal palace, Paṭiālā.

The above analysis of the technique, form and style of the wall paintings of the Western Himālayas indicates that it was essentially an art form greatly influenced by the miniature paintings of this region. It was, on the whole, conventional, decorative and limited. It is, of course, true that there is an element of grace and lyricism in these paintings like the Pahāḍī miniatures which is quite unique. It is like the people who produced it—delicate, gentle, beautiful and graceful but lacking in the vitality and robustness of the earlier wall paintings.

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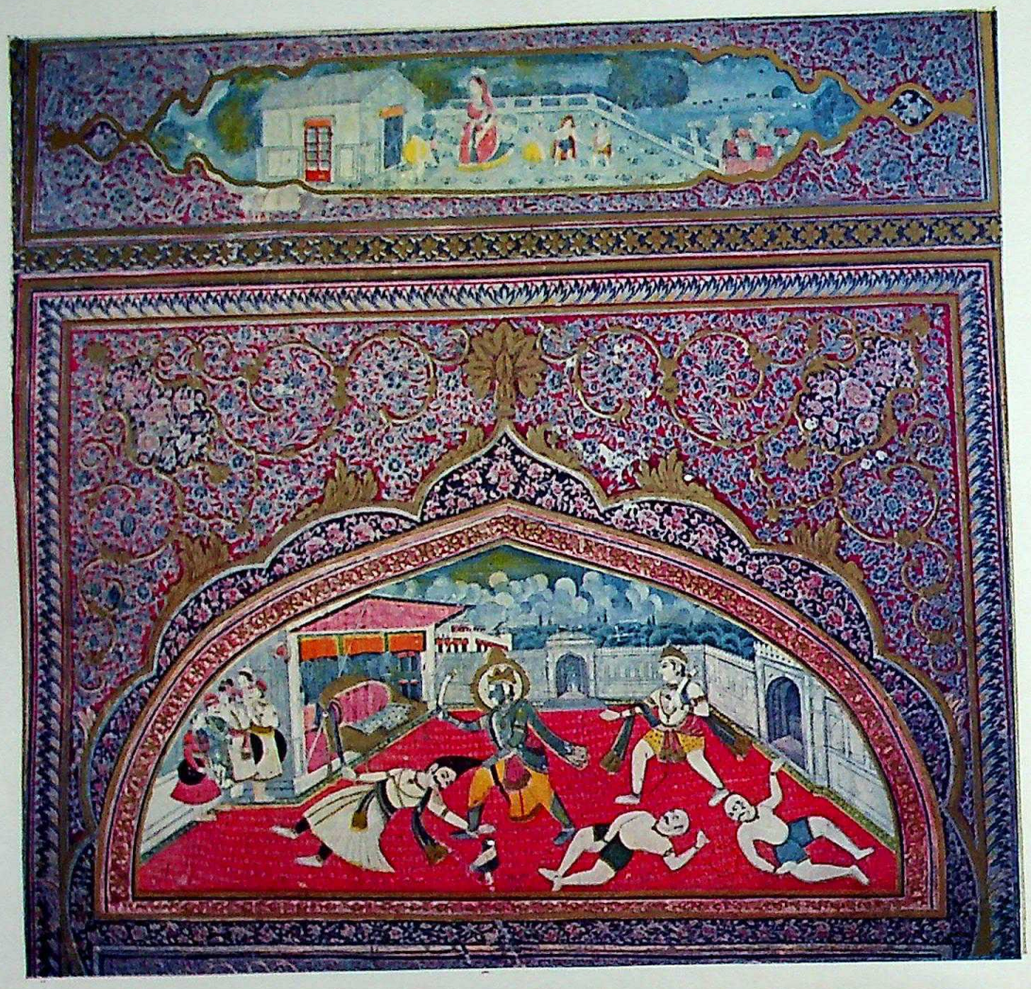

Plate XXXII

Motī Mahal Palace, Paṭiālā

'Kṛṣṇa killing Kaṁsa.'

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6

WALL PAINTINGS AND MINIATURES —A COMPARATIVE STUDY

THE INTENSE URGE for artistic expression in the Western Himālayas from the seventeenth century onwards produced miniatures as well as wall paintings. Available evidence points to the fact that while the miniatures were produced here from the second half of the seventeenth century onwards, known wall paintings cannot be dated earlier than the last quarter of the eighteenth century. However, it is quite possible that, as in some other parts of India, a painting tradition may have existed in the Western Himālayas earlier than the datable remains. The fact that the artists were well acquainted with the technique of preparing plaster for wall paintings seems to lend support to this view. Unfortunately, not a single painting before this period exists for purposes of our study. It is difficult to say, at this stage, whether the miniature or the mural style of painting was older in the Himālayas. What can, however, be surmised is that both these styles deeply influenced each other.

The impact of the classical wall painting tradition has already been discussed in Chapter 5. The differences between the older tradition and the Pahāḍī wall paintings mainly exist due to the profound impact of the existing miniature tradition on the latter style. It was further through a mastery of the Pahāḍī miniature that the artists of our wall paintings absorbed elements from the earlier miniature tradition of the Pāla, Orissā, Jain, Mughal, Rājasthānī and Nepālī styles.

The different schools of Indian miniatures did not spring like mushrooms after isolated monsoon showers. They were the products of hothouse cultivation practised by subsequent generations almost continuously. Their separate geographical locations are to be explained by the shifting balance of political power changing the sources of patronage. The eleventh century Pāla miniatures of Bengāl were the earliest to arrive. Their most important contribution to the tradition of miniature painting was the symbolic use of colour. For instance, the use of red by the Pāla artists for painting backgrounds has, according to some art critics, come to be associated, in the subsequent tradition of Indian painting, with being a symbol of sensual longing for passion[1].

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In Pāla painting, however, colour symbolism was taken from *tāntric* ritual whereas in Pahāḍī and Rājasthānī paintings the use of bright backgrounds is purely for pictorial effect. The Pahāḍī artists were not influenced by religious symbolism in the choice of colours. The effective use of a deft and sinuous line, modelling the forms by delicate and expressive variations of pressure and to a lesser extent by depth and lightness of tone[2]—the other hallmarks of Pāla painting, also left their impression. It is also possible that the natural colour used for painting skins of human figures in our wall paintings and miniatures harks back to Pāla times.

There is practically no evidence to indicate that Orissā paintings had any effect on Pahāḍī artists. The Western Indian Jain miniatures have, however, left an indelible mark on subsequent Indian painting. Jain religious themes and motives did not inspire copying but their influence was on style. The Jain use of strong pure colours, the stylish figures of ladies, the heavy gold outlines, the reduction of dress to angular segments, the enlarged eyes and the vast square shaped hands find their echoes both in Rājasthānī and Pahāḍī paintings[3]. They also cast their spell over Mughal and Deccanī painting.

The sixteenth century was creatively speaking fruitful for Indian painting. The art of miniature painting came into great prominence both under the Mughals and the Muslim kings of the Deccan and Mālwā and under the Hindu *rājās* of Rājasthān. All these schools came under the magic spell of the classical tradition of wall painting as well as the Jain miniature tradition and the Persian style of painting. The Mughals were instrumental in introducing elements of Persian tradition in contemporary Hindu painting as well as the subsequent style of Indian painting. The credit for introducing Western elements in drawing and painting in the Indian style also goes to the Muslim kingdoms. Culturally, religiously and content-wise, Pahāḍī painting which followed the Rājasthānī and Mughal schools absorbed a great deal from Rājasthānī painting. Technically and stylistically, it also owes a great debt both to the Mughal and Rājasthānī schools.

As already emphasised in the first chapter, the Hindu *rājās* of the Western Himālayas had close political contacts with the Mughal courts. Mughal painting could have influenced Pahāḍī painting either by its actual example, the Pahāḍī *rājās* seeing and acquiring these paintings and showing them to the hill artists, or by the immigration of artists from the Mughal courts to the employment of the hill *rājās*. The theory of immigration is based on the historical fact that the hills have always acted as a refuge for the political and religious victims of the plains. Kārl Khandelwālā[4], Douglas Barrett and Basil Gray[5] all believe that artists trained in the later Mughal style of painting migrated to the hills to seek refuge and patronage in the wake of political disturbances, more specifically after the sack of Delhi by Nādir Shāh in A.D. 1739. According to the local tradition[6] prevalent in Sujānpur Tīrā, the artists who painted the walls of the Narmadeśvara temple came there from Delhi. While it may be possible that later Mughal artists might have migrated to the hills, they cannot be considered as the immediate cause of Pāhāḍī painting. Pāhāḍī miniature painting can quite reliably be dated as beginning from the second half of the seventeenth century, which is before the break up of the Mughal *ateliers*. Definite evidence of the migration of Mughal artists to the hills is not available as yet. As even the earliest Pahāḍī paintings came under the impact of Mughal painting, it seems more likely that this influence was exerted by the artistic tastes of the local *rājās* being moulded by seeing Mughal miniatures. It is also possible that these *rājās* brought Mughal miniatures with them on their return from visits to the Mughal courts. We have already noticed in Chapter 5 the deep influence of the royal patrons on Pahāḍī painting. The possibility of changes in taste influencing changes of techniques is further supported

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by the fact that there was no sudden and abrupt change in techniques. Mughal influence was only gradually felt in the hills. At first it was confined only to nominal changes in the style of dressing as seen in Basholi painting but later on it led to more fundamental changes as seen in the Kāngrā style of painting.

In the Indian miniature tradition, before the arrival of the Mughals, most of the miniatures were painted as parts of book illustrations. Persian painting was also a pictorial art of decoration based on poetry and folk tales of Firdausī, Sheikh-Saadī and other poets. Under Akbar, however, this was no longer the preoccupation of the artists; miniature painting for its own sake as well as for the glory of their patrons became the painters' main forte. The Pahāḍī miniaturists, although primarily concerned with painting themes from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the Rāmāyaṇa learnt from the Mughals not to concentrate on pictures for books to the exclusion of independent miniatures. In fact the majority of Pahāḍī paintings consist of independent miniatures.

In drawing, the Mughal impact was on characterisation of figures and portraiture. The faces of many of the characters in Ajantā and Bāgh are remarkably expressive but there does not seem to be a conscious effort at portraiture. In subsequent Indian tradition, including Jain painting, there is practically no attempt at character delineation. In Persian miniatures it is difficult even to judge the sex of human figures. They seem to have the same appearance; slender and elegant, they appear to be divested of their bodies. The men have at times beards whereas women painted in an elongated and flexible fashion look like the cypresses to which Persian poetry compares them[7]. It was left to the Mughals to perfect the art of figure drawing and portraiture. Few examples can be found not only in Indian art but in world art of such unruffled tact and refined sensibility as in the Mughal portraits[8]. Mughal paintings are models of fineness and finish and in the amount of character that they exhibit they have not been excelled[9]. Never before or after has there been such shrewd psychological observation, portrayed with such economy of detail as during the heyday of Mughal art. Rājasthānī and Pahāḍī artists both learnt from Mughal painting in this respect. The rounded faces of Guler, as seen in a painting entitled 'Acrobats' and in another miniature, both exhibited in the National Museum, New Delhi[10], the line appears to be clearly inherited from a National Museum Mughal miniature[11]. The various Rājasthānī and Pahāḍī portraits of *rājās* and noblemen which were painted after the artists came into contact with Mughal art have made these painting styles so much more infused with life than Jain painting. In Pahāḍī wall painting also, there is great expression in the faces of some of the figures; for example, in the Kulū Devī mural (Fig. 3) the expression on the faces of *sādhūs* shows Pahāḍī portraiture at its best.

Composition on a grand scale after the manner of Ajantā had long been a thing of the past. In the Pāla, Orissā and Jain miniatures it tended to be simple, not overcrowded with figures and not overambitious in the arrangement of motifs. Mughal painting, on the other hand, conveys a sense of greater violence and grandeur[12] than that which existed in the Persian or the Western Indian miniature tradition. This concept of composition on a grand scale was passed on to later Rājasthānī and Pahāḍī artists. When we compare, for example, Jain miniatures[13] (Fig. 74) with those from Kāngrā[14] (Fig. 75) we realise the difference in the panoramic vistas, vitality and violence that now distinguished Pahāḍī miniatures from the pre-Mughal miniatures. The artists of the wall paintings of the Pahāḍī region also liked compositions in the grand Mughal manner as seen in the illustrations of the *darbār* of Kaṁsa in Nūrpur (Fig. 1) and Rukmiṇī receiving a message from Kṛṣṇa in Piṇḍorī (Fig. 45).

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Fig. 74 *Jain Miniature—'The birth of Mahāvīra.'*

Fig. 75 *Kāngrā Miniature—'Nanda's migration from Vṛndāvana.'*

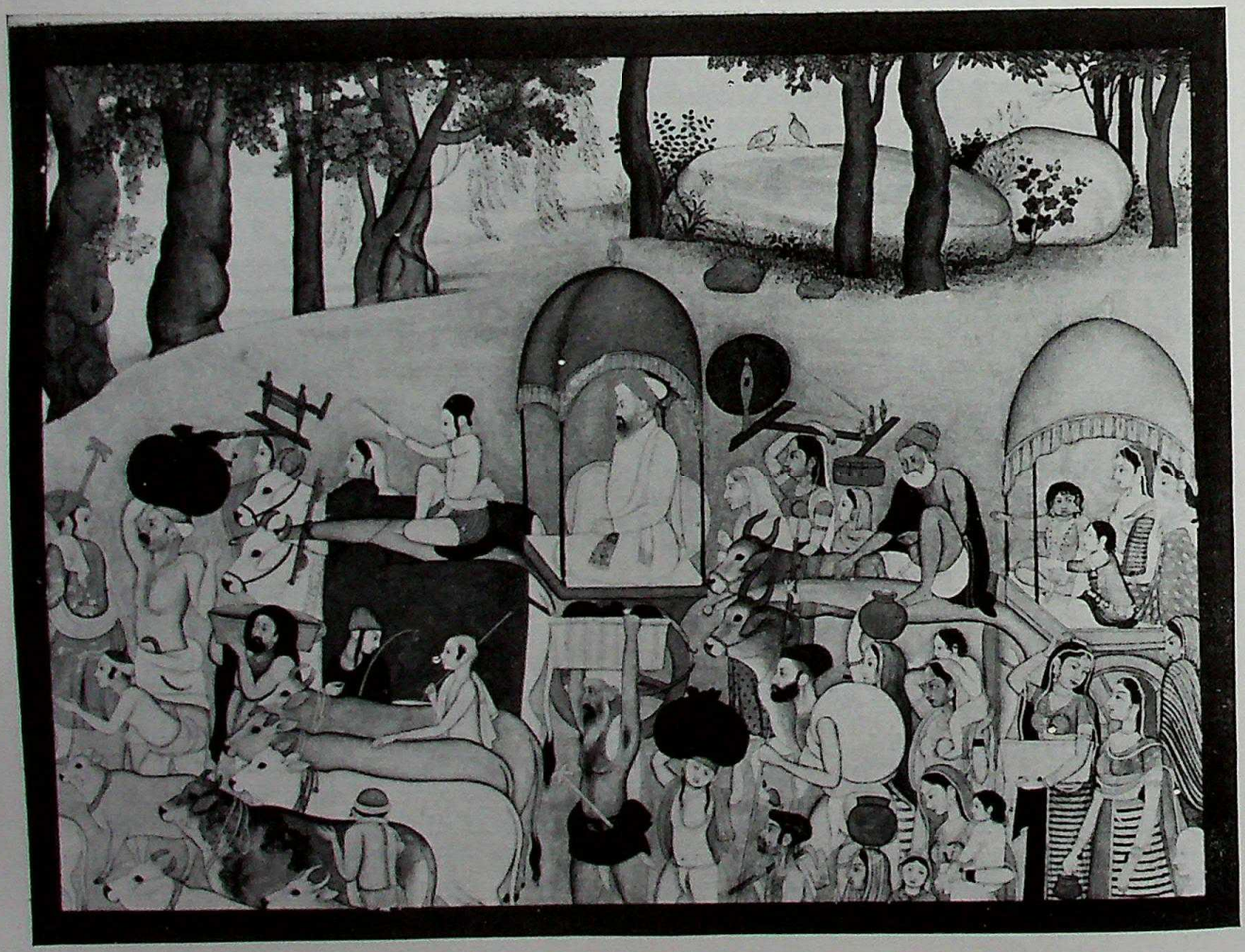

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Fig. 76 *Mughal Miniature—'Akbar in the hunting field.'*

Pahāḍī artists learnt from the Mughals a refreshing kind of perspective which is not found in our earlier miniatures. The Mughals in this case again resuscitated the style of Ajantā in showing perspective. In Ajantā the artists employed what is termed by Stella Kramrisch as the multiple perspective[15]. This enables us to get a bird's eye view even to see what is happening behind the wall or the rock. In this way an almost physical line is drawn between the nearer and the more distant objects. An excellent illustration of this perspective can be seen in a Mughal miniature from the *Akbarnāmā* showing a dejected Akbar in the hunting field, found in the India Office Library, London (Fig. 76). Its influence can also be seen in a Kotāh miniature from Rājasthān illustrating princesses hunting[16]. In the Gauriśaṅkara paintings of Sansār Chand and Jamālo (Plate XIII) the multiple perspective is again effectively employed.

The feeling for landscaping as portrayed in Mughal art was unrivalled in the pre-Mughal Indian miniature tradition. The sense of wonder and intimacy with which nature is depicted was primarily inherited from Persian painting. The Persians always aimed at maintaining the beauty and harmony of nature even when portraying violent feuds like the duel between Sohrāb and his grandson Bazrū[17]. Nature was further exploited by the Persian artists to serve as an imaginative reflection on a sensual experience. This is best illustrated in a painting of the famous Persian story of the first meeting of the Irānian prince Humay and princess Humāyun, daughter of the Khāqān of China[18]. Here the flowers are in the foreground of the picture; it is the human figures which are submerged in nature to the extent of having taken on a flower-like appearance in arrested expectancy[19]. The Mughal artists added to the Persian artists' attachment to the depiction of feeling, an equally strong love for naturalistic presentation. Emperor Jahāngīr shooting a lion[20] and a hunter climbing a tree[21] are two Mughal miniatures which illustrate this point.

The classical as well as the subsequent painting tradition in India does not match the Mughal's treatment of landscape. The Pahāḍī artists, besides having a profound love for nature

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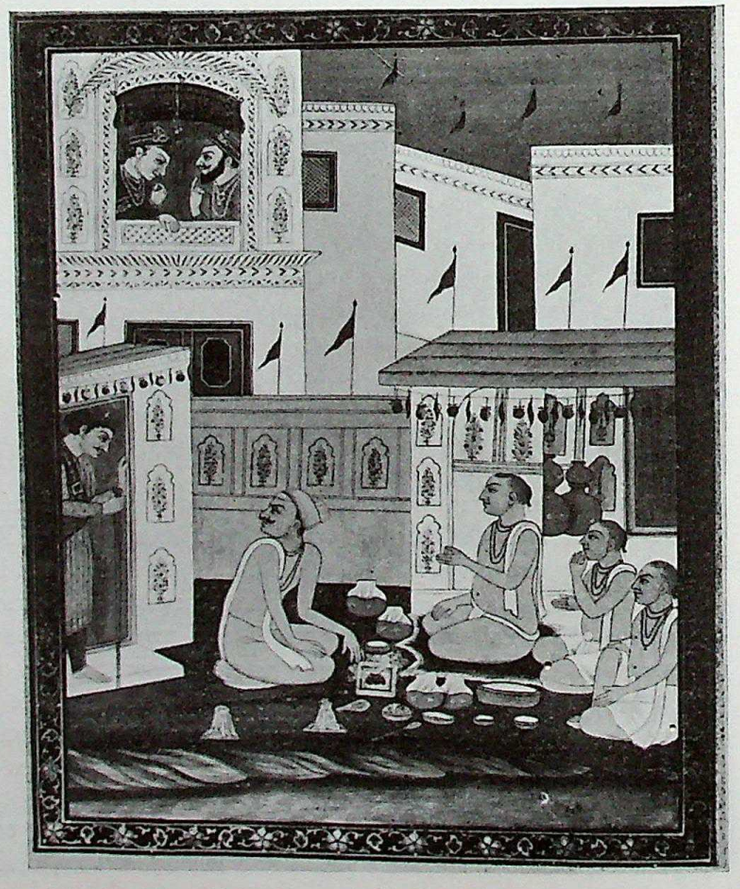
born out of their beautiful surroundings, pastoral society and the romantic literary tradition, learnt a lot from the Mughal artists in landscaping. Besides learning a more naturalistic treatment of landscape they also adopted certain specific methods of treatment of nature. The Pahāḍī treatment of trees and of clouds was also influenced by Mughal style painting. Some of the trees portrayed in Pahāḍī miniatures and wall paintings are not found in the hills at all, and seem to have been adopted *en bloc* from Mughal miniatures. An example of this can be seen in the trees with blob-like leaves found in a Mughal miniature showing a nobleman shooting a black buck[22], having an exact copy in a Kāngrā miniature[23]. The treatment of landscape shown at a distance as learnt by the Mughal artists from the West was later on adopted by both Pahāḍī and Rājasthānī artists. A comparison of Āsaf Khān standing in the midst of his armies with a village in the distance[24] portrayed in the manner of Italian paintings in the seventeenth century with a Pahāḍī miniature illustrating Yaśodā pushing the swing of Kṛṣṇa[25] brings out this similarity very clearly.

Birds and animals are drawn with great skill and attention to detail in Mughal as well as Persian paintings. This is an ancient Islamic practice which provided an outlet for the representational instinct so ruthlessly limited by religious usage and is seen in the Arab manuscripts of the so-called Mesopatamian school of the thirteenth century under the Abbāsids.[26] The Indian art tradition sustained a great feeling for painting animals. The Pahāḍī artists also took intense delight in the paintings of birds and animals. While this has a deep psychological significance in the sense that the artists belonged generally to a pastoral society deeply imbued with the love of animals, but, stylistically speaking, the Mughals introduced greater realism in the treatment of animals.

Fig. 77 *Kāngrā Miniature—'Brahmins worshipping.'*



The Mughal miniatures seem also to have influenced architectural designs in the composition of Pahāḍī miniatures and wall paintings. In Western Indian Jain paintings and early Rājasthānī paintings are found simple and geometrical representations of architecture. For example, an illustration from the *Kalpa Sūtra* Jain miniature dated A.D. 1439[27] shows only a plain hut and architectural divisions like rooms are drawn simply by intersecting columns and lines to indicate compartments. The artists of Ajantā and of Persia knew how to paint elaborate architectural compositions and the Mughals

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adopted the basic formula of the Persians but further improved upon it as illustrated in the miniature depicting the arrival of the famous musician Tānsen in the court of Akbar[28]. The Pahāḍī artists learnt how to show grand architectural details from the Mughals. A Kāngrā miniature found in the National Museum[29] (Fig. 77) as well as Kaṁsa's *darbār* in Nūrpur wall painting (Plate I) have elaborate architectural designs.

It is not without significance that some of the elements of European drawing absorbed by the Mughals were also passed on to the Pahāḍī artists. In addition to the treatment of distant landscape as already noted, the Pahāḍī artists also adopted the drawing of a halo around the heads of reigning monarchs. This was copied from the Christian miniatures of the West by the Mughals. The use of flying angels as seen in Piṇḍorī (Fig. 43) was also absorbed by the Pahāḍī artists from the Mughals. The use of shading, a distinctly accidental innovation, was learnt by the Pahāḍī artists from the Mughals.

Although the Pahāḍī artists absorbed a great deal of the technique of Mughal style painting, important differences remain, mainly attributable to the ancient cultural attitudes and modes of expression of the Hindus and Muslims. Stylistically speaking, the Indian use of symbolism throughout the ages is not present in Mughal paintings. Mughals believed in objectivity and their paintings represent clearly what they were intended to represent without any hidden meaning[30]. The endowment of nature with the mysteries of passion as in the Rājasthānī and Pahāḍī schools does not find poetic expression in Mughal painting, nor is it customary to find in it the association of flowers, birds and animals with human sentiment[31]. Mughal artists concentrated on painting male figures rather than women and while there is a distinct attempt at individualisation of men, the representation of the female form is done in a typical manner without much concentration on depiction of character in Mughal painting[32]. The Pahāḍī artists, on the other hand, took great delight in painting women in all their loveliness and grace. They painted women of various types in different situations and with attention to character delineation.

In drawing, although the lines employed are generally the same, with the influence of older Jain tradition stronger in Pahāḍī painting than in Mughal art, there are still differences between the two styles. Pahāḍī drawing is more lyrical than Mughal drawing. In composition also there is a significant difference. The Mughals admired symmetry of a very severe order—in buildings, in gardens and at times even in paintings. Every element was balanced by another component which constituted its *Jawāb* or answer[33]. The painting of the *darbār* of Jahāngīr celebrating the festival of *Āb-Pāshi* dated A.D. 1640 shows this very clearly[34]. The throne of the Emperor, the groups of musicians and courtiers are all balanced against each other. This rigid adherence to symmetry is not present in Pahāḍī painting even when court scenes are illustrated. The *darbār* of Rāma in Damtāl (Fig. 28) and of Kaṁsa in Nūrpur (Fig. 1) although painted formally do not adhere to any rigid symmetry. Thematically speaking, compositions of the two schools have great differences due to different cultural patterns as already discussed. The Mughal artists preferred secular themes such as grand *darbārs*, hunting scenes and celebrations of royal births, whereas the Pahāḍī artists preferred religious themes.

In the use of colours, the artists of the Western Himālayas seem to have drawn much more from the Western Indian tradition than from Mughal painting. It seems that the people of Gujarāt and the Western Indian plains, fed up with the unchanging hues of their topography, liked to display rich colours in their paintings. The Mughals also borrowed from this style and did not confine

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themselves to the soothing colours of the Persian miniatures. On the whole, however, the Mughals took pleasure in softly blending colours rather than in sharp contrasts. The Pahāḍī artists learnt the use of pastel colours from the Mughals especially as far as Guler and Kāngrā style paintings are concerned. Rājā Sansār Chand of Sujānpur Tirā seems to have had a special fondness for pastel shades and one of the best series of panels in the Narmadeśvara temple is painted in pastels (Plate X). Pahāḍī artists, on the other hand, generally used a rich and bright palette. There, is nothing in Mughal painting to compare with the sharp bright colours employed in painting the backgrounds of Basholī miniatures or the dark maroon background of Nūrpur wall paintings (Plate I).

To sum up, it would be true to say that Mughal art was more interested in secular themes. It was, to a great extent, a closed, eclectic, aristocratic art; a growth of luxury and leisure; a product for the delight of the cultivated eye without any democratic folk appeal[35]. Pahāḍī art, on the other hand, was more concerned, as is common in the other Hindu schools, with religious themes. Although, both were patronised by royal courts, Pahāḍī art was more imaginative, full of the unexpected and appealed to the tastes of the common men. Pahāḍī artists seem to have borrowed elements of composition, landscaping, animal drawing and portraiture from their Mughal counterparts. They did not, however, produce an imitative art but blended the Mughal elements to evolve something quite distinctive of their own genius.

Deccanī miniatures and wall paintings on the other hand do not seem to have influenced Pahāḍī painting. The only thing linking both schools appears to be the use of sprays of pink flowers common in Deccanī miniatures and in Chambā miniatures and wall paintings. A comparison of a Deccanī miniature[36] with a Chambā miniature[37], both found in the National Museum, with Chambā Rangmahal's paintings makes this point clear. These sprays of flowers are also common in later Rājasthānī painting and it is possible that this motif may have travelled from the Deccan to Rājasthān and from there to the hills.

Rājasthānī painting was contemporaneous with Mughal painting. Early painting in Rājasthān was basically an adaptation of the Jain style of painting. In it the Rājpūts' predominant instinct was for swaggering form, swirling line and haughty compositions, consisting of startling colours, brusque distortion, vitality and excitement[38]. This is seen in the essentially abstract and symbolic paintings of the Mewār school. In the later Rājasthānī schools like the Kishangarh, Bundi and Kotāh styles, due to Mughal influence there was a more tender approach to naturalism and suave delicacy. It was only then that Rājasthānī art became more aristocratic, fashionable, decorative and conventional with a hypersensitive aesthetic sense but without its original heroic proportions. The Rājasthānī styles which most influenced Pahāḍī painting were the earlier Mewār, Jaipur and Jodhpur schools.

The influence of Rājasthānī painting on Pahāḍī styles was natural considering that they both belonged to the same cultural tradition. It has already been noticed in Chapter 1 that most of the Pahāḍī *rājās* claimed descent from Rājasthānī families and in Chapter 3, it has also been brought out that there were close religious contacts between the two geographical divisions. The Rājasthānī and Pahāḍī princes visited each other's areas for purposes of pilgrimage and the spread of Vaiṣṇavism into the hills was primarily as a result of the effort of Vaiṣṇava *maṭhas* from the plains. The two areas also had a common literary tradition as already brought out at length in Chapter 5. In view of these historical and cultural ties there were bound to be great the-

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matic similarities between Rājasthānī and Pahāḍī painting although there are some differences in emphasis. Both Rājasthānī and Pahāḍī art give a visual image to the lyrical grace of contemporary *Braj Bhāṣā* poetry with its intense devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. They are alike in making symbolic use of the Kṛṣṇa legend in reflecting their patrons' life of ease and comfort—dancing, music and the wanton playfulness of lovers in union and separation. Unlike early Mughal painters, Pahāḍī and Rājasthānī artists took great pleasure in illustrating musical subjects as seen in the abundance of miniatures with *Rāgamālā* themes. As far as the wall paintings of the Western Himālayas are concerned, their emphasis is more on religious themes as compared to Rājasthānī wall paintings. For instance, nowhere in Pahāḍī wall paintings are found scenes of open revelry in the harems of *rājās* as in Puṇḍārikjī-ki-Haveli in Jaipur where a drunken *rājā* is being dragged in a trolley by the ladies of the harem.

Stylistically speaking, Pahāḍī painting gained on coming in contact with Rājasthānī painting. It is important to note that Rājasthānī artists, unlike the Mughals, produced significant wall paintings as well[39]. A stylistic comparison between the wall painting of Rājasthān and the Pahāḍī region has already been attempted in Chapter 5, as far as the influence of Rājasthānī drawing, especially in the direction of angularity of line, on our wall painting is concerned. It

Fig. 78 *Kāngrā Miniature—'Kṛṣṇa setting out on a journey'.*

is not, however, clear as to whether this angularity of line was adopted by the Pahāḍī wall painting centres directly from the Rājasthānī murals or via their own miniatures. The latter seems more likely. The influence of the Mewār style of drawing on Basholi painting is very evident. It can be seen in the angularity of line, the shape of the noses and special types of animals found in Mewār[40] (Fig. 78) and Basholi[41] miniatures in the National Museum. It appears that

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through Basholī, because of its physical contiguity and marriage alliances, the Chambā drawing also has Rājasthānī overtones. Chambā miniatures found in the National Museum bear testimony of this influence[42]. The angularity of the line in the Devī-rī-Kothī and the Rangmahal murals at Chambā being akin to the Mewār line has already been brought out in Chapter 5. Interestingly enough, there is great similarity in the drawing of Mārwār and Kulū miniatures. A comparison of Mārwār painting of the *Hiṇḍola Rāga*[43] with Kulū miniature illustrating *Ṭoḍī Rāgiṇī*[44] shows similarity in the shape of eyes, jaws and the general stance of animal figures.

In composition the early Pahāḍī miniatures, especially those of Basholī, have great similarity in their treatment of the compositions and colour schemes in a simple and direct manner to Mewār miniatures. On the whole, however, both the Pahāḍī and the Rājasthānī methods of composition were greatly improved by coming in contact with Mughal painting, particularly in regard to the representation of spaciousness, grandeur, architecture and landscape. Rājasthānī painting, however, had great influence in the use of colour as far as Pahāḍī painting is concerned. The Basholī style derives the burning intensity of its colours from the Mewār school. The depth and power of the maroon used as a background in the Nūrpur panel of Kaṁsa's palace (Plate I) also has overtones of Mewār colouring. Even in the Rangmahal paintings of Chambā the use of orange, red and maroon for painting backgrounds is reminiscent of Rājasthānī elements derived via Basholī (Plates XXIV, XXIX and XXX). A special feature of the Jaipur school of painting, its use of heavy gold borders on the *saḍīs* of female figures, also seems to have influenced Chambā and Arkī miniatures. A comparison of Jaipur miniatures[45] with a Chambā miniature[46] both found in the National Museum illustrates a similar use of gold. This is also found adopted in the Rangmahal, Chambā, and Motī Mahal, Paṭiālā, wall paintings. There are also similarities in the shades of colours and the general scheme of colouring employed by the Mārwār and Kulū miniatures.

An interesting possibility which has not so far been explored by scholars and art historians is the likelihood of Nepālī and Pahāḍī art influencing each other. Nepāl has for centuries been in intimate contact with India in political, religious and cultural matters. It also lies in the same Himālayan belt as the hill states of the Western Himālayas. We know, as discussed in Chapter 1, as to how Khāsā and Rājpūt migrations took place from Rājasthān to the entire Himālayān belt including Nepāl. Linguistically, Rājasthānī has greatly influenced Western Pahāḍī, Central Pahāḍī and Nepālī languages. During the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries there seems to have been active commercial and political contact between the various Himālayan kingdoms and a trade route existed from Garhwāl to Nepāl. It is well-known that a confederacy of hill *rājās* led by the *rājā* of Bilāspur invited Amar Singh Thāpā, a Gorkhā general, to come to their help against Sansār Chand. Nepāl was also greatly under the cultural influence both of Bengāl and later of Rājasthān. There are indications that Nepālī art came in contact with Deccanī painting. All these facts lead us to surmise that there is a possibility of interaction between Pahāḍī and Nepālī art. Stylistically speaking, there is some evidence to support this thesis. A comparison of National Museum Nepālī scroll[47] (Fig. 79) and a Basholī[48] (Fig. 80) miniature in the same collection supports this view. The shape of the eyes of the human figures, the style of wearing turbans by men and the use of shades of green and maroon are similar. It is also interesting to note that the maroon coloured background of Nūrpur wall painting (Plate I) is very like the background of the above mentioned Nepālī scroll. It is not possible to say at this juncture as to whether Pahāḍī art influenced Nepālī art with certain idioms and colour sense or the Nepālīs brought them to the hills, but the probability of a close link seems strongly indicated.

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Fig. 79 *A Nepāli scroll.*

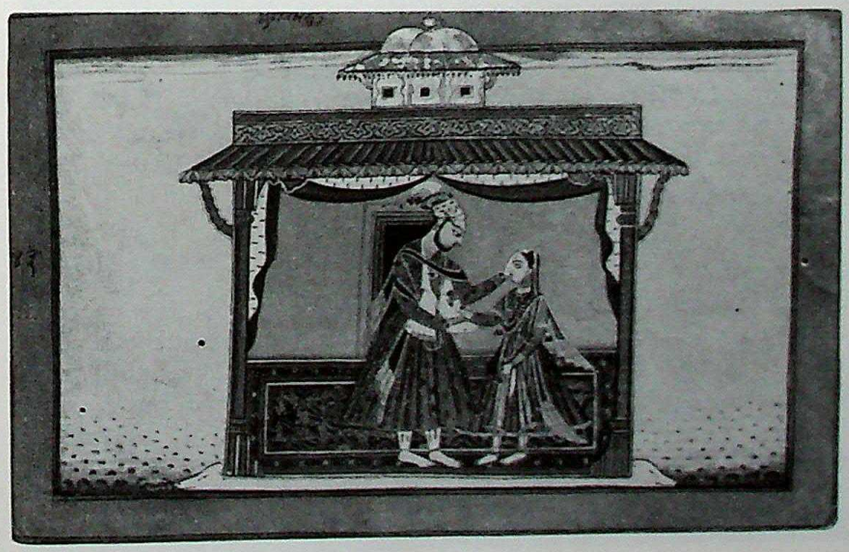

Fig. 80 *Basholi Miniature—*
'A nāyak and nāyikā.'

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An analysis of the various schools of Indian miniature painting discussed above shows that the paintings of the Western Himālayas did not grow in isolation but were the product of a long and continuous tradition. Strains of Pāla, Jain, Persian, Mughal and Rājasthānī art combined to produce these delicate blossoms. This should not, however, lead us to conclude that Pahāḍī painting was purely derivative. The Pahāḍī artists had the genius to evolve out of their artistic inheritance, with outside influence, something unique in Indian painting as far as its mannered lyricism and grace are concerned.

As the datable miniature tradition is older than the extant wall paintings, it was bound to have great influence on the wall painting style. As far as their motivation, choice of themes and patronage were concerned, both were the products of similar sources. The best Pahāḍī miniatures, however, appear to have been painted before the Pahāḍī artists started painting the walls of temples and palaces. In many respects the wall paintings represent the last burst of creativity of the Pahāḍī artistic effort. Ānanda Coomāraswāmy[49] thought that Pahāḍī miniatures were reduced wall paintings. This does not appear to be correct when viewed in the background of all the researches made into Pahāḍī painting after the writings of Ānanda Coomāraswāmy. It is more likely that, stylistically speaking, the artists of the wall paintings carried a heavy burden of the technique of miniatures. In the earlier wall paintings lines and brush strokes are made in a sweeping manner which is not found in our wall paintings. This debt was in fact so onerous at times that the artists forgot to paint in the genuine wall painting tradition and instead tried to paint enlarged miniatures on walls. This can be judged by the fact that in our earlier wall paintings of Nūrpur, Damtāl first floor and Shogī, the artists painted in the narrative tradition of wall painting in large panels. Later on at Piṇḍorī, Narmadeśvara, Gaurīśaṅkara and Chambā, they painted miniature-like panels enclosed in floral designs. Even the figures in later wall panels tended to be small as in miniatures. It does not, however, follow from this that even in the case of the later wall paintings the artists completely forgot the canons of the classical wall painting tradition. They continued to paint continuous panels in the narrative style and have large compositions as in the mural tradition. It can, however, be said that unlike the classical wall paintings, the artists of Pahāḍī wall paintings did not unhesitatingly and invariably employ proven wall painting techniques but they tried to combine the techniques of wall and miniature paintings with results not always favourable to the quality of their work.

In styles of drawing it seems that the artists of the wall paintings had no innovation to offer. Drawing continues to be linear with the use of both curved and straight lines. The angular line derived from Rājasthānī drawing seems to have influenced early Basholī and Kulū miniatures, and Chambā wall paintings of Devī-rī-Koṭhī and Rangmahal and later on the Motī Mahal palace paintings of Paṭiālā.

It is interesting to note that we have exactly similar styles of drawing in our wall paintings as in the local styles of miniature painting. The best complex of wall paintings is in the Kāngrā style as seen in the Shogī, Nadaun, Narmadeśvara and Gaurīśaṅkara temples. The artists in all these centres have painted in the style commonly referred to as the 'Kāngrā school'. The drawing of the facial types, eyes and figures are all in the same style as in Kāngrā miniatures. A comparison of Narmadeśvara wall painting of Rājā Gopī Chand begging *bhikshā* from his new *rāṇī* (Plate XI) with a Kāngrā miniature found in the National Museum[50] (Fig. 81) brings this out. The realistic drawings of mountains on the walls of the Gaurīśaṅkara temple (Plate XVI) are done in a fashion which is similar to what one finds in another Pāhāḍī miniature (Fig. 82) in the National Museum collection[51].

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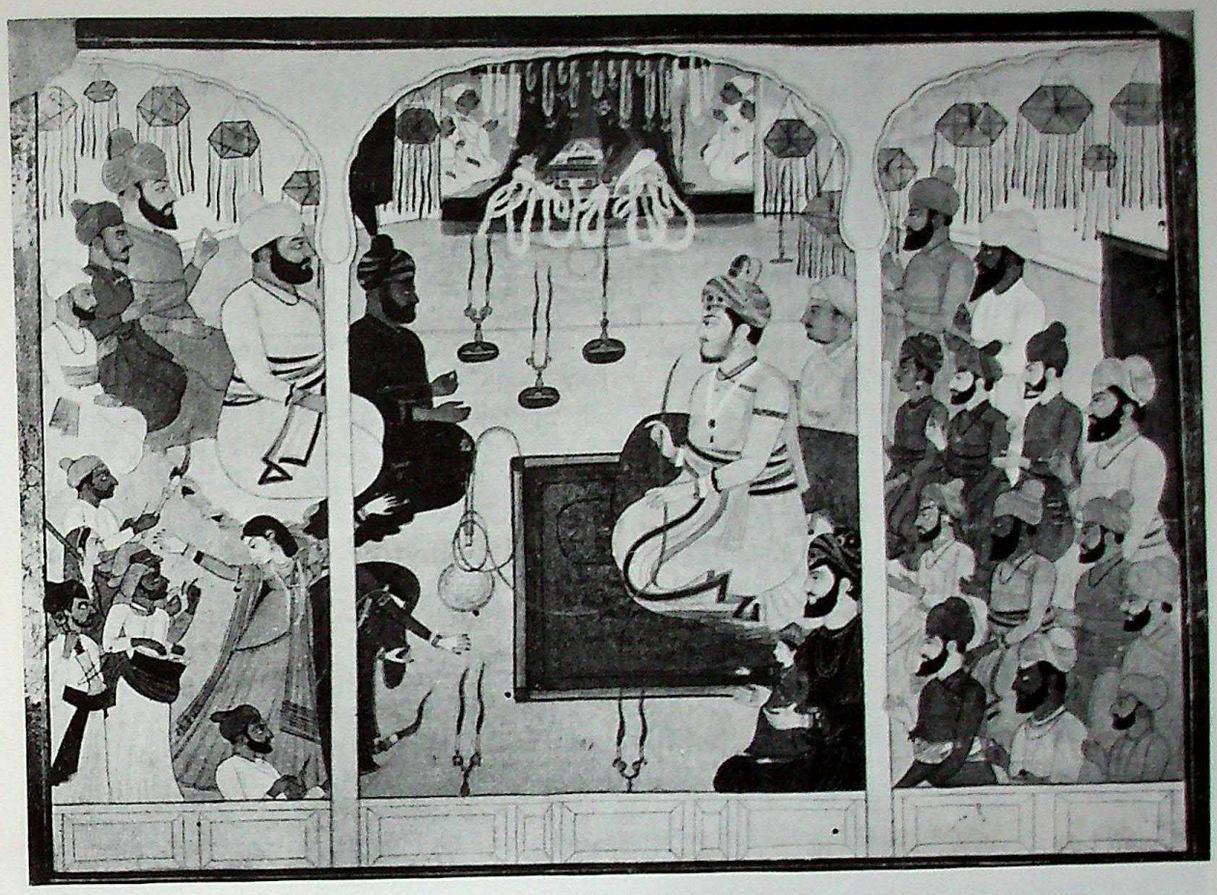

Fig. 81 *Kāngrā Miniature—'Sansār Chand's darbār.'*

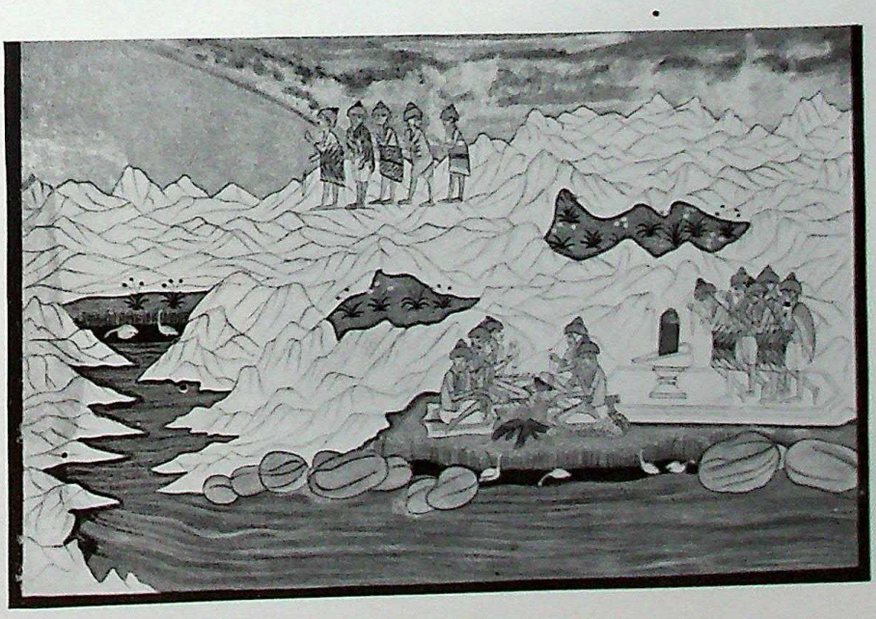

Fig. 82 *Kāngrā Miniature—'Yogis meditating.'*

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The drawing of the eyes and facial types in Nūrpur miniatures illustrating a rich lady seated on a terrace[52], and another entitled 'Lady welcoming the lover'[53] are similar to those found in a Nūrpur wall painting of the two ladies holding hand bags (Fig. 10) and of Damtāl wall painting of Kṛṣṇa going out to join the Mahābhārata war (Fig. 18). Even the Piṇḍorī painting of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the chariot (Plate XVII) going out to war has the same facial types.

W. G. Archer[54] is of the opinion that the wild and stony bleakness of Kulū produced a barbaric roughness in drawing. This does not appear to be correct. It would be truer to say that the artists of Kulū and the Devī mural gave greater attention to the depiction of rustic themes as compared to any other centre of painting in the Western Himālayas. This is due to the fact that the nomadic tribes of this area lacked the sophistication of an urban civilisation. Even those artists who did not originally belong to the Kulū region were bound to be influenced by the existing cultural and economic milieu. This rusticity is very well illustrated in Kulū National Museum[55] miniatures depicting rural scenes of the lives of common people and *yogīs* meditating (Fig. 82 and Plate XXI). In one of the miniatures a man is even shown with a goitre, a subject which more sophisticated schools of Kāngrā and Guler would have avoided. The Devī mural also contains many rustic themes (Fig. 73). In the actual styles of drawing and painting also, there are great similarities between the Pahāḍī miniatures and wall paintings. For example, in the drawing of eyes and the use of shades of maroon, black and green, the same technique has been used by the Kulū Devī mural and the National Museum Kulū miniature[56]. The drawings of certain characters also in the Kulū Devī miniatures are very similar to Kulū miniatures of the National Museum. For example, the drawings of cowherds in the Devī mural and Kulū miniatures[57] found in the National Museum are similar. Great likeness exists in the drawings of soldiers in Devī mural (Plate XX) and another Kulū miniature[58] (Fig. 83) also found in the National Museum. The illustration of women also is alike in Kulū miniatures[59] (Fig. 84) and the Devī mural (Plate XX).

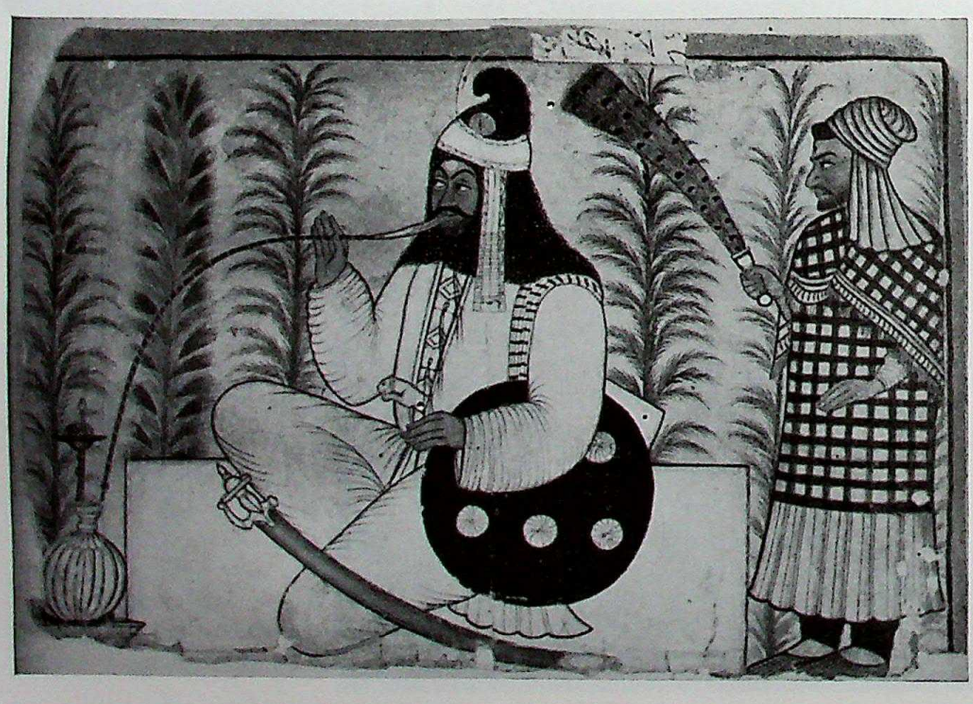

Fig. 83 *Kulū Miniature—'A soldier.'*

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Fig. 84 *Kulū Miniature—'A nāyikā.'*

Chambā miniatures are more delicately drawn than the Rangmahal wall paintings; however, there are stylistic similarities. There is a striking resemblance in the facial characteristics of human figures in Chambā Rangmahal and those seen in Chambā manuscript illustration of Bihārī's *Satsai* dated A.D. 1779 found in the National Museum collection[60] and also in a miniature[61] illustrating the Devi fighting the demons found in the National Museum collection (Fig. 85). The National Museum Chambā miniature illustrating Kṛṣṇa washing the feet of Rādhā[62] (Fig. 86), who looks haughtily at him displays the leaves of trees, the construction of the architecture and

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Fig. 85 *Chambā Miniature—'Mahiṣamardini Devī.'*

designs on the carpet used in the buildings exactly in the same style as found in the Rangmahal panel illustrating the same theme.

The National Museum Mañḍi[63] miniatures show a treatment of noses and rigidity in the stance of figures similar to that found in the wall paintings of Mañḍi.

Apart from the similarities of the techniques of drawing in the wall paintings and the miniatures, they depict female human faces which belong to an idealised feminine type. The people are mostly shown in profile. Karl Khandelwālā[64] calls this 'the Kāngrā standard face'. Full faces are also seen but in both the miniatures and the wall paintings they are quite rare.

Fig. 86 *Chambā Miniature—'Kṛṣṇa touching the feet of Rādhā.'*

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The artists of the wall paintings and the miniatures generally gave a stylistic treatment to costumes on human figures. They were circumscribed by the existing fashions. There were two distinct styles in men's fashion. Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd and the rural people were painted wearing a *dhotī* as the lower garment and a broad scarf to cover the upper portion of the bodies as seen in Chambā Rangmahal panel of *Govardhanadhāraṇa* (Plate XXV) and then a National Museum Chambā miniature[65]. The second type of costume was in the Mughal fashion and consisted of tight pyjamas known as *churīdārs* and on top a *jāmā* or a long coat varying in length to below the knees or ending at the ankles. A turban is invariably worn with this dress according to the prevalent fashion as seen in a Pinḍorī painting and a similar National Museum[66] miniature. It may be noticed that the angular line present in depicting clothes in Basholī miniatures is absent in the wall paintings. Flowing and curving lines are used instead.

Women's costumes are illustrated in three chief styles in our paintings. The first style consisted of tight fitting *churīdārs*, a blouse and a long transparent gown ending just above the ankles with an *oḍhaṇī* or a scarf on the head as seen in Basholī miniatures. This style does not figure prominently in our wall paintings except in Nūrpur (Plate I) or when showing Muslim ladies as in Shogī and in Pinḍorī (Fig. 43). The technique of giving transparency to clothes generally consisted in painting the *churīdārs* in bright colours and the gown above them in white so that the darker colours were visible through the lighter. In the second style, the women wore a thick gown from the neck to the ankles over *churīdārs* and with an *oḍhaṇī* on the head. This would seem to be the most popular style as it is seen illustrated in Shogī (Fig. 39), Pinḍorī (Fig. 49), Narmadeśvara (Fig. 26) and Chambā (Plate XXXI). The gown was commonly painted in dark colour, the most popular being red. The third style consisted of a skirt or *lehaṅgā* with a bodice or *cholī* and an *oḍhaṇī* on the head. It was the popular dress for the common people and was very common in pastoral scenes. Yaśodā with the new born Kṛṣṇa in Narmadeśvara panel (Fig. 4) wears this costume. In Basholī miniatures also this is the dress[67]. It is of interest to note that while the line of *lehaṅgas* in Narmadeśvara, Gaurīśaṅkara and Kulū is gently curved, in the Chambā, Devī-rī-Koṭhī (Fig. 59) and Rangmahal murals, the line is quite angular. The artists used very light colours in painting this costume generally giving the bodices and the skirts very bright contrasting colours.

The ornaments worn by men and women and the latter's cosmetics were stylised according to the areas in which the paintings were executed.

The artists of our miniatures and wall paintings not only drew human figures in the same style and dressed and decorated them in a similar fashion but even the cows in the two genres are painted in a common style. The Kṛṣṇa cult inspired the artists to paint the cows with great tenderness and loving care. Moreover, a predominantly pastoral community naturally looked upon the cows with affection. In spite of this, there is stylisation in the drawing of cows and in their movements which occurred perhaps due to constant repetition of similar religious themes. Lacking in any particular originality, the artists of the wall paintings simply copied the miniaturists while painting cows. Kārl Khandelwālā[68] has illustrated models showing the prevalent set forms of drawing cows. This stylisation is also seen in the drawings of horses. The horse was first painted with great vigour by the miniaturists of Jammū and Guler and also by the mural artists of Shogī. Later on stylisation set in as seen in the National Museum Kāngrā miniature[69] and in the Kulū Devī mural (Plate XXII).

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Landscape painting forms an essential part of Pahāḍī miniatures and murals. Here again, it is noticeable that, stylistically speaking, exactly similar conventions operated in miniatures as well as in wall paintings, as far as the illustration of trees, grasslands and rivers is concerned. The innumerable varieties of trees in the Western Himālayas do not seem to have strongly touched the imagination of the Pahāḍī artists. They have mostly drawn trees found in the plains or modish trees in fancy colours not found anywhere. Stylisation in the drawing of trees occurred to such an extent that Kārl Khandelwālā[70] has been able to classify set forms of trees drawn by the Pahāḍī artists. These set forms exist in miniatures and wall paintings. Only the artists of Narmadesvara temple seem to have evolved an original model of a tree full of movement as found in an illustration of Nanda rescuing Kṛṣṇa (Plate VII). This powerful tree is not repeated elsewhere either in the miniatures or in the wall paintings. Stylisation in landscaping was not confined only to the depiction of trees but extended to rivers and grasslands as seen in Chambā mural (Plate XXVII). In a miniature showing two *gopīs* sitting prettily on the bank of a river, the river is quite artificially drawn.[71] This has its counterpart in the river shown in Kulū Devī mural (Plate XXII). Grasslands shown in these two paintings are also similar.

In the depiction of the inanimate world, as in the animate, the Pahāḍī artists both of the miniatures and the wall paintings seem to have had a similar approach in the treatment of certain subjects. For example, the Pahāḍī artists learnt from the Mughals not only stylistic details but also the method of actual representation of architecture. There is hardly a possibility that, besides looking at Mughal miniatures with architectural representations the artists had before them competent imitation of Mughal architecture in the hills. Buildings in the hills were not built in red sandstone or in marble as in the case of contemporary Mughal and Rājasthānī constructions. They were instead built with stone found in the hills. Yet the artists seem to have imitated Mughal art so much in this respect that airy white and red sandstone *bārādarīs* supported by semi-circular arches and elegant pillars and minarets were painted by the artists without having any actual buildings of this type to act as models for them. We find that the illustration of a fort in Nūrpur wall paintings is in red sandstone colour. Similarly the palace of Rājā Gopī Chand in Narmadeśvara (Plate X) and Rāma in Damtāl (Fig. 28) are painted in white marble colour. In the Basholī and Kāngrā miniatures[72] found in the National Museum, New Delhi, forts and buildings are again painted to imitate red sandstone and marble buildings. Another feature common to both wall paintings and miniatures is iconography. The figures of Kṛṣṇa, Śiva and the Devī are drawn and painted almost in the same style in the two types of paintings.

After the drawing was completed with charcoal, the method of applying colours was alike in miniatures and wall paintings. The quality of colours used was also similar. The main colours employed were red, green, blue, purple, maroon, yellow, orange, brown, grey, black, white, gold and silver or were combinations of their pastel shades. The artists strove in both cases to leave a smooth effect without any trace of brush-strokes. Rarely in Pahāḍī painting does one come across evidence of colours losing their smooth finish or brush strokes, bristling for space. On the whole, however, the miniaturists were more successful in giving a translucent and bright effect to their paintings than the artists of the wall paintings. In some panels of Narmadeśvara temple in Sujānpur Tirā a pearly but translucent colour effect does exist, but in general, in the other wall paintings the colour effects as now evident are not very bright. It is, however, possible that the ravages of time may have taken their toll and the colour of the wall paintings may have originally been as bright as those of the miniatures.

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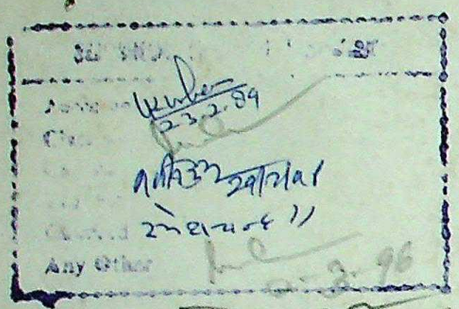

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